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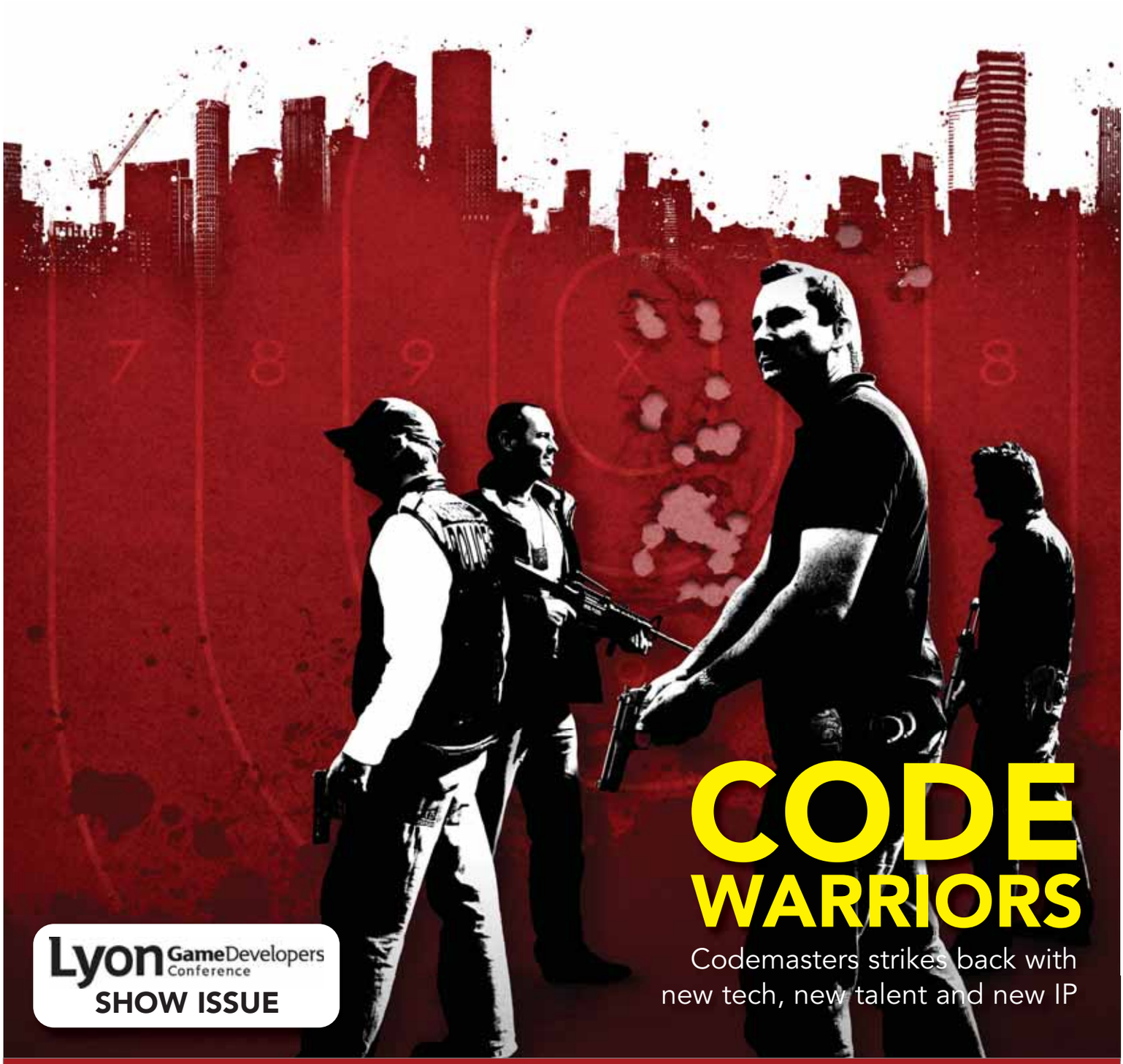


CODE WARRIORS

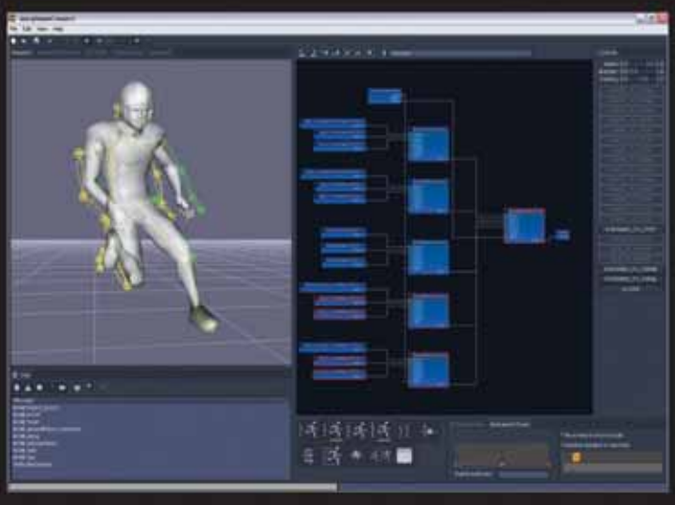
Codemasters strikes back with new tech, new talent and new IP

Lyon GameDevelopers Conference
SHOW ISSUE

INSIDE ▸ CHARACTER ANIMATION ▪ THE SHARED TECH REVOLUTION ▪ TOOLS NEWS & MORE

morpheme™
advanced animation system

Now with Wii support



morpheme is the industry's first graphically authorable animation engine. morpheme consists of morpheme:runtime: an advanced runtime animation engine for PLAYSTATION®3, Xbox 360™ and PC, and morpheme:connect: a highly-customizable 3D authoring application.

morpheme gives animators and developers unprecedented control over the look and feel of their animations in-game: blends, transitions, compression, etc. can all be previewed and modified graphically in morpheme:connect and live on the target platform.

morpheme:runtime ships with full source code and integrates seamlessly with euphoria, NaturalMotion's Dynamic Motion Synthesis technology.

For more information, visit www.naturalmotion.com

blend tree

Advanced graphical tools for building complex blend trees. Real-time visualization of animation source contribution through node highlighting

blending

Graphical control of transition blending between states in the transition graph

multiple characters

Visualization of multiple runtime characters in morpheme:connect for easy authoring and analysis of character interaction

network

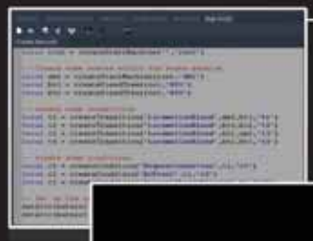
Advanced graphical tools for creating and visualizing transition networks through drag-and-drop

control parameters

Exposure of custom high-level controls for entire animation system. Real-time manipulation through sliders or game pad controller

scripting

Full Lua scripting for automating tasks, adding AI logic or polling game pads for real-time input



timeline

Graphical mark up of animation data to add one-shot and duration events, for highlighting footfalls, sound effects, etc.

node palette

Advanced blend notes for dragging and dropping into transition network. Fully customizable node types through C++ and scripting

animation browser

Easy browsing and selection (drag & drop) of source animation. Animation list is automatically updated to reflect changed source files

transition requests

Exposure of custom transition messages. In-tool emulation of interaction between morpheme:runtime and game AI system

NATURALMOTION

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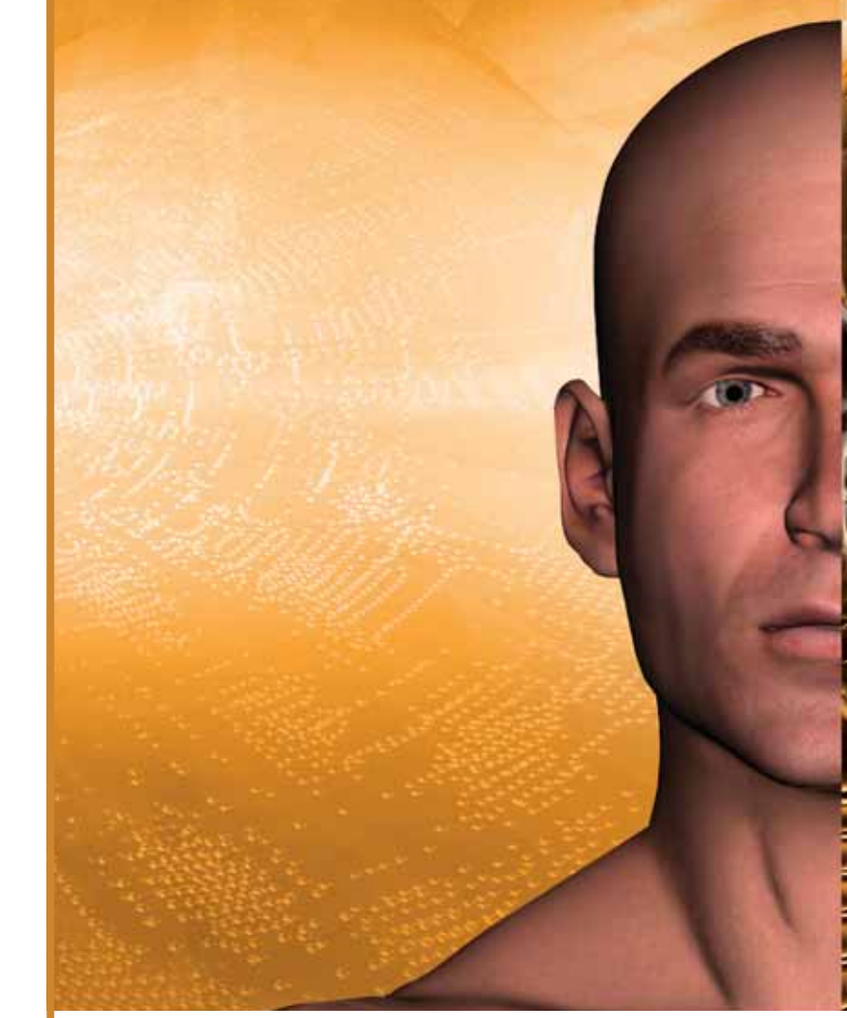
You've got the looks.

We've got the brains.



Kynapse A.I. Middleware

Kynogon's A.I. middleware, Kynapse, is the brains behind the work of some of the leading game developers out there. In fact, **6 of the top 10 game publishers** use Kynapse in developing their best-selling titles.

INTEGRATED UNREAL ENGINE PARTNER

www.kynogon.com

France ■ United Kingdom ■ Canada

kynogon

no mind no game

ALPHA

ADVENTURES IN GAMES DEVELOPMENT: NEWS, VIEWS & MORE

"Carrying game brands to a new generation has mixed results..."
The year's new IP examined, p14

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The French Revolution?

Five Parisian studios band together to build new middleware platform • €13m initiative backed by Paris Mayor

A band of French games studios have teamed up to develop a shared crossplatform middleware standard for use by all developers around the globe – and have scored €6.5m funding from France's Ministry of Industry to help realise their vision.

Called Play All, the strategy has been brought together by five studios HQ'd in Paris – Darkworks, Kylotonn, Load Inc, White Birds Productions and Wizarbox – and has the support of French engineering schools in the computer science field and the Mayor of Paris as well.

All involved are convinced that the next revolution in games development will come about not via competition between studios but collaboration and the mutual assistance between companies.

TECH WITHOUT BORDERS

In a statement, the studios said they had "put aside their fear of sharing technology, know-how and teams of programmers" in order to build a crossplatform toolchain standard for all major hardware platforms.

The consortium of studios plans to allow those interested in helping develop a common platform to use the tech, no matter where in the world they hail from, with the first beta of the middleware to be ready next year.

Together, the five companies are setting up a joint venture game technology company with dedicated offices, plans for which include founding a team of 40 engineers to build the technology over the next two years.

> ***"I am extremely keen to promote the 'Paris brand' in this field of innovation..."***
>
> ***Bertrand Delanoë, Mayor of Paris***

"Collaboration and consolidation of a crossplatform technology standard between independent studios is the next revolution in our industry," said Guillaume Gaouraud, MD of Darkworks and representative of Play All.

"Our five companies are making this turn now to be up and ready for the present and next cycle of growth."

The project has a budget of €13m, and is backed by the Parisian competitive cluster Cap Digital.

The effort is getting €6.5m funding from the region's agencies and the French Ministry of Industry in a bid to fuel the local games development sector.

Bertrand Delanoë, the mayor of Paris, commented: "Paris in the 21st Century will not confine itself to conserving its rich heritage. We also need to build a city that's fit for the future and prepared to meet the competitive challenges of the next 20 years.

"The city needs to provide attractive conditions to foster capital formation and job creation in the human services industry, the biotechnology sector and cutting-edge digital technologies," he added.

"Paris has shown itself to be extremely creative in relation to Web 2.0, the video-game industry, and strategic technological sectors, such as Internet research, and I am extremely keen to promote awareness of the 'Paris brand' in this field of innovation."

Although its tech is still be revealed, Play All already has support from a number of French colleges, the Ministry of Industry – and further backing from the Mayor of France, Bertrand Delanoë (pictured left)

WORLD*VIEW* GLOBAL NEWS > p08

Editorial
Universal praise

While 2007 for games development has been a year punctuated by surprising acquisitions, to me the most interesting stories are the ones on the previous page, opposite this and our cover.

From the plucky band of French devs securing government finance to build a middleware platform to be shared with the rest of the industry (*page 5*), through the expansion plans of Britsoft firms Codemasters (*page 38*) and Eidos (*right*), unified engine solutions and stable multiplatform development isn't just flavour of the month, it's a mandate for the future.

And it's about time that this problem was addressed, too. For too long, the world's developers have had to bear the brunt of the technological Phony War fought by format-holders (and, to some extend, the variety of hardware manufacturers that make the PC a continued moving target) that seem more interested in dazzling (and bamboozling) consumers rather than aiding developers.

These things won't go without incident however, and while it's an up yours to anyone that doubted developers could get to grips with making things work across a mix of architectures that are often compared and contrasted, I think it's safe to say that there is an uphill battle for some of these ideas.

As Codemasters' Gavin Cheshire says in our interview with him, and those we grilled on the state of multiformat development (*starting on page 31)* agree, productions for PS3, 360 or PC specific SKUs may start at the same point, but still require bespoke tweaking. Plus, these developers will have to tackle the difficult balancing act of making tech that's 'universally applicable', not too free form and yet not too game- or genre-specific.

Thankfully, I'd think most are aware of these possiblities. Because otherwise the worst pitfall of this generation won't be that the likes of the PS3 present a challenge to coders – it would be that the response to such problems is to accidentally shoot the industry in the foot in the meantime.

Michael French
michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

Eidos to fuel using shared

Britsoft firm plans next step for games development with ambitious

Jane Cavanagh, CEO of Eidos owner SCi, has told *Develop* that the company is eyeing a potential studio in China, as well as more potential sites in Canada, as the British publisher looks to further expand its production capacity – with a key emphasis on shared technology.

The comments come as the publisher celebrates the success of its Canadian studio in Montreal, Quebec, which is already one of the biggest companies in the region and is hoping to boast a headcount of 200 staff in the next few months.

"We're looking at China," said Cavanagh. "We have a couple of people who have gone to start a hub out there, predominantly to increase what we're doing in terms of outsourcing, and to partner up with the existing studios. Over a period of time we'll either increase our presence through existing partnerships or open up our own studios."

She added: "As far as other places in Canada are concerned, we would consider it. At the minute, what Quebec offers is head and shoulders above what anywhere else in Canada, let alone the rest of the world, is offering. As far as we're concerned, we're quite happy to scale up what we're doing there."

On how the Montreal base might expand, she explained: "As far as Montreal is concerned, we plan to expand on the existing infrastructure that we already have. We have the option to take more space there as we grow organically. At the moment they're working on one project, but we can get them up to three or four simultaneous projects with reasonable ease."

But key to any expansion, Cavanagh revealed, was the company's new approach towards sharing the technology from its staple studios such as *Tomb Raider* developer Crystal Dynamics and *Hitman* and *Kane & Lynch* creators IO Interactive.

"The studio in Montreal which we shall be expanding over the coming months is really up to speed on the Crystal Dynamics engine, which powers *Tomb Raider*," she explained.

"The intention is that if we open further studios in cost-effective locations, we could drop in either the Crystal or the IO Glacier engines. That means they're immediately able to share technology and asset libraries on a global scale."

Tomb raiding has taken Lara Croft and Eidos all over the planet. Where in the world will the technology that powers the heroine take her publisher parent next?

It's a long-idealised strategy that many other larger companies have so far failed to implement – different tech used across the EA empire being one well-known case (*although Codemasters thinks it has cracked the issue too – see pages 38 to 42*) – but Eidos seems confident it can build a growing production resource around unified tech.

The company currently boasts studios in a variety of locations around the world (*see 'Eidos Around The World'*) but said its focus is on expanding plans around cost-effective locations.

With Budapest and Canada sewn up, it makes sense for Eidos to look further afield to China, especially given how

global growth tech initiative

plans to grow global operation and sharing tech across studios

the firm has structured its production processes, explained Phil Rogers, Eidos' corporate developments boss – and it's clear the company has a keen, bullish approach towards potential acquisitions.

"These areas have real occupational scale. Great example is that studios are general – 10 years ago they worked in a very serial fashion," he explained. "With our strong technology backbone, our studios can now work in parallel across multi-IPs centered around one studio. We can work with studios in different locations, work with outsource groups and really accelerate that production pipeline."

www.eidos.com

EIDOS AROUND THE WORLD

USA: Crystal Dynamics, current developers of the *Tomb Raider* franchise

CANADA: Eidos Montreal, founded in February 2007 and working on an unannounced next-gen title

UK: *Championship Manager* development team Beautiful Game Studio, *Conflict* series creators Pivotal, and mobile studios Morpheme and Rockpool

DENMARK: IO Interactive, creators of *Hitman* and new title *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men*

HUNGARY: Budapest-based Eidos Studios Hungary was founded in 2006 to finish work on *Battlestations: Midway*

SWEDEN: Another European studio, Eidos Sweden was formed last year

Kuju rolls a Doublesix

Next studio rebrand with new office

Another of Kuju's studios has rebranded, with its Godalming, Surrey studio renamed to Doublesix and moved into new premises in Guildford.

It's the third of Kuju's teams to change name. The Brighton-based team became Zoe Mode in March, to reflect its work on social entertainment, while the Sheffield office renamed itself Chemistry as an embodiment of the studio's choice to solely develop using Epic Games' Unreal Engine 3.

Similarly, the Doublesix name has been chosen to reperesent the studio's new focus: shorter-form games for digital distribution.

Explained James Brooksby, studio head: "Doublesix is a new studio within Kuju Entertainment that is focused on addictive, 'have another go', digitally distributed games for all platforms.

"We thrive on small, innovative, enthusiastic teams who will give their all to projects that inspire them. We believe that with the advent of XBLA, PSN and Wiiware the future of digitally distributed games promises to be more diverse than ever in both scale and genre. Doublesix has been established to deliver on that promise."

The studio had previously made a name for itself as online experts, producing the multiplayer components of a number of PC and console games.

Meanwhile, the move to Guildford also represents reinvigoration for that area of the country when it comes to development – in the past 18 months EA UK, Media Molecule and Codemasters have joined long-running Guildfordites Lionhead and Criterion to open studios in the town.

Kuju has two other studios – Rail Simulator, which works on transport simulators for EA, and Kuju London, which currently enjoys a fruitful relationship with Nintendo working on the *Battalion Wars* series.

Sony halves cost of PS3 dev kit

SCE has cut the price of PlayStation 3 development kits in a bid to "contribute to cost-saving measures of the development community".

Prices for the PS3 SDK will be reduced to $10,250 in North America, ¥950,000 in Japan and €7,500 in Europe. The format-holder is also integrating tools made by its Bristol, UK subsidiary SN Systems with the SDK. ProDG, SN-DBS, and SN Linker have already been integrated – SN Compiler will be available to developers from mid-December.

SCEI has also updated Debug PS3 units so they can be used to support programming, effectively upgrading the machines from their sole use as a QA machine.

In the official announcement about the cost-cutting and new SDK, Sony said it will keep cutting the price of its development technology to support studios – and presumably to make sure keep PS3 is an attractive development proposition.

WorldView

Our regular round up of development stories from across the globe…

HERTFORD, UK

November saw the addition of a jobs board to our increasingly-popular web presence.

Featuring a wide variety of open positions across the sector's disciplines, from programming to production and artist to tester, the online jobs service is open to both agencies and independent recruiters.

Deals have already been struck with leading agencies and studios, and applicants can upload their CVs and be notified of any relevant vacancies.

www.developmag.com/jobs

SAN FRANCISCO, USA

Plans continue to build for February's busy Game Developers Conference, which runs from the 18th to the 22nd of the month at the now-usual base of the Moscone Center, San Francisco.

A number of studios, including 2K Boston, Harmonix, Bungie, Ubisoft Montreal, Valve, Ninja Theory, Naughty Dog and BioWare are already signed up to deliver key sessions on game design, business and technology during the main three day conference.

Meanwhile, the two-day GDC Mobile is to return, plus special summits for serious games, virtual worlds, games outsourcing, and casual games.

The biggest push for the event, however, is the community element – all attendees are allowed to signup for myGDC, a new social and professional networking site that lets delegates organise their schedule, make contacts and keep in touch with each other both pre and post event.

Develop is on hand as a media partner for the show, too, with a bumper-sized issue with increased circulation distributed at the show.

www.gdconf.com

TEXAS, USA

id Software has opened a new mobile games division.The studio's new department will work on mobile versions of its *Wolfenstein* and *Quake* titles and follows the successful introduction (1m sales and counting) of its *Doom RPG* mobile game two years ago, and follow-up *Orcs and Elves*. Those games were made with id in conjunction with Fountainhead Entertainment, a games firm founded by Katherine Anna Kang, wife of id co-founder John Carmack. Former director of business development at id, Kang will now also serve as id Mobile's president.

"We are operating on the assumption that mobile gaming has a potential for huge growth," Carmack told *USA Today*. "It's at a tipping point. Everybody has a phone, and almost every phone is powerful enough to do good games on it."

Carmack added that id's reputation will help raise the profile of what is often considered 'the ghetto of game development': "It's going to be easier to attract more people to work for a project when they are actually working for id.

"The whole reason we are in the mobile arena now is I was just really appalled at how bad [mobile games] were," Carmack added. "We're already making profit on two million units of games sold, but we are kind of holding out this hope there might be a breakout moment when the industry gets five to 10 times larger."

www.idsoftware.com

For global games development news as it breaks head to *WWW.DEVELOPMAG.COM*

CHESHIRE, UK

Warner Bros. has made good on the promise it made to *Develop* three months ago about its aggressive plans for development – it has acquired Lego Star Wars developer Traveller's Tales and its publishing parent TT Games in a multi-million pound deal.

The two were already working together on *Lego Batman*, but now Traveller's Tales, which specialises in property-based games for kids, has access to lots of other well-known movie IP to transfer into interactive entertainment.

Smartly, the studio is also staying 'independent', maintaining its current contracts with the likes of LucasArts. Traveller's Tales boss Jon Burton told Develop that the move also means the studio can potentially widen its talents, perhaps moving into pure CG animation in future, aided by its recent acquisition of mocap outfit Centroid.

www.ttgames.com

"I was a big video gamer growing up, so working on Assassin's Creed is my chance to be part of video game history..."

Veronica Mars and Heroes star Kristen Bell talks up her part in Ubisoft's latest new IP. Although maybe she's jumping the gun with the 'video game history' bit

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

The Game Developers Association of Australia has now had assurances from both the current government and the opposition party that in the coming months authorities will review the possibility of introducing a tax break for games studios. In Australia, TV and and film companies can get a tax rebate of up to 40 per cent on costs – but it has not been extended to other media, such as games.

Having lobbied throughout the year for things to change, last month the GDAA was told by the opposition government's that it would review the matter if elected. Now the minister for art and sport has made the same promise if the current government (at press time – the election will have passed by the time you read this) is re-elected.

Whatever the result of the election, the GDAA now has guarantees that its calls will be heard. If the subsidy is extended to games, Australia will become a more attractive location for games development and will undoubtedly see increased activity from publishers and larger independents.

www.gdaa.com.au

NAGOYA & OSAKA, JAPAN

Ubisoft's no stranger to these pages – in the past year its seen through an ambitious and aggressive global ramp up of its production capacity, with a studio in China, one acquired in Germany, and bolstering its resource globally with studios from Montreal, Canada to Newcastle, UK and Casablanca, Morocco. The publisher added Japan to its 'list of places conquered' in November with the acquisition of DS specialist Digital Kids.

The studio already had a relationship with the publisher, developing a number of the *Petz* titles for the Nintendo handheld. The studio has 20 staff split between two offices in Nagoya and Osaka. It will be interesting to see how Ubisoft fares as a Western publisher with a studio in Japan – earlier this year EA closed its Japanese development team to favour contracting independent third parties rather than running and internal team in the region.

www.dkids.co.jp

GLOBAL REPORTS

CZECH REPUBLIC: DISNEY

Walt Disney Internet Group's Prague studio has officially been renamed the Disney Mobile Games Studio, with the aim of making it WDIG's biggest European base for mobile phone game development via a staffing boost. It sits alongside a roster of mobile games studios owned by Disney based in Los Angeles, Tokyo, Prague and Beijing. Disney first opened the studio in 2005 via the acquisition of Living Mobile, and plans to tap into the region's talent base as it grows the team.

www.disney.com

UK: SCEE LEADS PSP

SCE Worldwide Studios' London Studio has become the first developer to launch a PSP title solely intended for digital distribution. *Beats* is a rhythm-action game that interfaces with your own music, and launched alongside the newly redesigned PSP store.

store.playstation.com

AUSTRALIA: PRIZE QUEST

Infinite Interactive swept the board at the Game Developers Association of Australia annual awards, winning best console title, best PC title, best handheld title, best gameplay and overall best game for their smash-hit *Puzzle Quest*.

www.infinite-interactive.com

UK: NCSOFT EXPANSION

NCsoft has unveiled ambitious expansion plans for its Brighton, UK office, with a goal of doubling the studio's headcount by 2009. The office was set up in 2004 to be solely focused on QA and localisation, but announced earlier this year that it would start development operations there. "The growth over the next couple of years in Europe will come from our internal studios," said NCsoft Europe CEO Geoff Heath. In September the company was given a cash injection of nearly a million pounds from the South East England Development Agency to create 116 jobs by 2010.

www.ncsoft.com

UK: OOPS

In last month's reprint of the UKTi's latest games industry research, Martin Parry was mistakenly listed as the contact for more info. The correct people to speak to are Tiga – email Stephanie.Rickwood@tiga.org for more details about the reports.

THE DEALS

SUPERHERO INTELLIGENCE
Sony Online Entertainment has licenced Kynogon's Kynapse AI middleware for use in its upcoming DC Comics MMO, to help "deal with dynamic large scale worlds in a seamless manner."

ROCKEZ-VOUS?
Online middleware company Quazal will be providing its technology to power Harmonix's forthcoming *Rock Band*. Lobby and matchmaking services will be provided by the technology firm's Rendez-Vous middleware for both Xbox Live and PSN, while Quazal's Net-Z technology will be used for 'enhanced connectivity'.

WE HEART GDC
Develop has signed up as a media partner to GDC 08. Our February issue will benefit from increased circulation and be distributed to attendees at the show, while news updates and daily bulletins will be issued throughout the event itself via our website.

SONY SLEUTHS
MMO superhouse Sony Online Entertainment has adopted a new service from database company EnterpriseDB to better analyse player behaviour. The Cognos 8 Business Intelligence system has allowed engineers to better analyse trends in game data from the production database within one of its games, giving a better impression of player attrition and retention within its virtual world.

GAMESPY'S EPIC DEAL
Epic has signed up to use GameSpy in *Unreal Tournament 3*. The move follows on from Gamespy's recent entry into Epic's Integrated Partners Program, and will power the *UT3* online experience on both the PC and PlayStation 3.

VIVE LE VICON
French studio Quantic Dream has invested in the latest Vicon F-Series mocap cameras in a move to boost its plans to build realistic virtual actors for production of its new, still unannounced PS3 game for SCEE.

THQ-I
Omegame has signed a deal with THQ to have its UI middleware Menus Master put in several upcoming titles.

DEVELOPER CHART

OUR MONTHLY RANKING OF THE WORLD'S STUDIOS BASED ON UK GAMES SALES

NOVEMBER 2007

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	STUDIO DETAILS		BEST SELLING GAME
1	▲ 2	EA CANADA		FIFA 08 (PS2, PS3, PSP, XB360, WII, PC)
2	▲ 31	KONAMI DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT		PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008 (PS2, XB360, PS3, PC)
3	■ 3	NINTENDO		THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS (DS)
4	▼ 1	BUNGIE		HALO 3 (XB360)
5	▲ 79	SPORTS INTERACTIVE		FOOTBALL MANAGER 2008 (PC)
6	● NE	BIZARRE CREATIONS		PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 4 (XB360)
7	● NE	VALVE		THE ORANGE BOX (XB360, PC)
8	▲ 35	JUICE GAMES		JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS (PS2, XB360, PSP, DS, PSP)
9	▲ 12	EA REDWOOD SHORES		MYSIMS (DS, WII)
10	▼ 8	MAXIS		THE SIMS 2 (PC, PS2, PSP, AC, GC, XB)
11	▼ 7	EA TIBURON		TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 08 (PS3, PSP, XB360)
12	▼ 6	EA SALT LAKE		TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 08 (WII, PS2, PC)
13	▲ 57	RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT		CRASH OF THE TITANS (PS2, WII, 360)
14	▲ 32	INSOMNIAC		RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN (PS3)
15	▼ 4	EA LA		MEDAL OF HONOR: AIRBORNE (XB360, PC)
16	▲ 73	A2M		HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL: MAKIN' THE CUT! (DS)
17	● NE	ASOBO STUDIO		RATATOUILLE (PS2, WII)
18	▲ 24	NINJA THEORY		HEAVENLY SWORD (PS3)
19	▼ 11	INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS		SUPER PAPER MARIO (WII)
20	▲ 28	OFFICE CREATE		COOKING MAMA (DS, WII)

CHART KEY: ▲ UP ON LAST MONTH ▼ DOWN ON LAST MONTH ■ NO CHANGE IN POSITION ● NEW ENTRY ▭ INDEPENDENT STUDIO

CHART COMMENT

Footy fans rejoice, for October's chart shows that football games are still firm favourites with UK gamers, with *FIFA 08* nudging EA Canada up to the top space and fan-favourite *Pro Evo 2008* propelling Konami into second all the way from 31st.

But it was a good month in retail for those of us whose interest in the beautiful game begins and ends with WAG antics, with the Christmas rush of new titles starting to heat up. *Zelda: The Phantom Hourglass* helped Nintendo maintain its third position, while *Halo 3*'s continuing sales take the sting from Bungie's fall to fourth from last month's pole position. Bizarre's *PGR4* helped the newly-acquired team jump into sixth place as this month's highest new entry, while Valve's shooter compendium *The Orange Box* sold well enough to get the studio in at seventh place despite only being on sale for a small fraction of the month.

Sony's PS3 price drop also spurred on activity in October's chart, helping Insomniac re-enter the charts thanks to sales of *Resistance: Fall of Man* (helped to notoriety no doubt by the Church of England's 'promotion' of the game) and nudging Ninja Theory back into the top 20 as well.

Award for highest climber of the month goes to Canadian outfit A2M, whose DS title *High School Musical: Makin' the Cut* would appear to be going down well with the musical's target audience of apostrophe droppers, tweenyboppers and Develop staff writers. No doubt the young 'uns are also behind Asobo's entry into the top 20 with *Ratatouille* and Radical's huge *Crash*-propelled rise of over 40 places.

Finally, we'd be remiss if we didn't mention the surprising success of *Cooking Mama*, once again putting Office Create back in our top 20 – just going to show that quirky needn't necessarily be niche.

ChartTrack

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Euro devs sign 'video game manifesto'

Tiga, APOM, and other EGDF members demand cultural acknowledgement of gaming from EU politicians

Six European games development trade associations have signed a 'Video Game Manifesto' which they hope will help government ministers understand the cultural impact of video games.

The letter is signed by six member organisations of the European Game Developers Federation, which was formed a year ago. UK's Tiga, French association APOM, Finnish group Neogames, Benelux's BGIn, the Danish Producers Association and German association GAME have backed the move, which is also intended to argue the case for why games should be worthy of state support and protection. It has been sent to a number of EU bodies by APOM boss Guillaume de Fondaumiere.

"We believe that although video game production is a global industry, the values and talents applied to creating video games in Europe are not the same as those found in other parts of the world where these games are created, especially North America and Asia. There is a very distinct style to be seen in games created in our European countries, and it's a style that reflects the diversity and independence of European creativity, especially in terms of its originality," says the manifesto, pointing out that video games has captured the imagination of younger consumers especially and now sits alongside the traditional mediums of cinema, TV, the printed word and music.

The letter, signed by various European games development trade associations, has been sent the EU parliament (pictured above)

It adds: "Our view is that video gaming is no longer simply a form of entertainment, but is a Europe-wide culture in itself; a culture that conveys real values and draws on a huge range of artistic talent, much of which is borrowed from other disciplines."

The letter reiterates the view that the European development sector is under threat from those regions with government assistance, such USA, Canada and South Korea – and possibly also Australia, where lobbying by the Game Developers Association of Australia is garnering attention from the government.

"The effect of this support has been to move creative centres out of Europe," adds the letter. "The need to defend European cultural diversity and independence is now a cause for serious concern within the profession.

"Those who work in this industry fear that unless effective action is taken as quickly as possible, Europe will very soon be left on the sidelines of the digital media world restructuring process now underway.

"Emerging countries like India and China are investing heavily in gaming, as they are in all digital media, and will soon become major creative centres themselves."

As such, the signatories are now formalising their demand for cultural acknowledgment by those in the European Parliament: "The survival of creative diversity and independence in Europe is therefore under threat, and we are launching a formal and insistent appeal to the national and European authorities, the culture ministers of every member state, the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission. Our immediate demand is that all these bodies join with the signatories to this appeal in treating the video gaming industry as an integral part of European culture, and that individual countries should be entitled to introduce the national governmental policies required to support independent video game production."

www.egdf.eu

DEVELOP DIARY

YOUR COMPLETE GAMES DEVELOPMENT EVENT CALENDAR FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD...

JANUARY 2008

TORONTO INDEPENDENT GAMES CONFERENCE
January 17th to 19th
www.torontoigc.com
Developers based in Toronto get their own event.

FEBRUARY 2008

DICE SUMMIT 2008
Feburary 6th to 8th
Red Rock Casino & Resort, Las Vegas
www.dicesummit.org
The yearly conference for execs. Big name speakers have already been lined up, with Microsoft's Shane Kim, EA's John Riccitiello, Lorne Lanning and Ubisoft Montreal CEO Yannis Mallat set to deliver keynote talks.

CASUAL CONNECT EUROPE - WEST
February 6th to 8th
Felix Meritis, Amsterdam, Holland
amsterdam.casualconnect.org
The casual games association hosts its regular conference for Western European studios, publishers and biz dev people looking to get into this fast-growing category.

GDC 08
February 18th to 22nd
Moscone Centre, San Francisco, USA
www.gdconf.com
GDC boasts its usual blend of sessions, business opportunities and expo show-floor fun. Along with the three days of main conference and expo (February 20th to 22nd), the week long event includes GDC Mobile (February 18th and 19th), and the Independent Game Festival (February 20th to 22nd).

GAME CONNECTION AMERICA
February 18th to 22nd
Moscone Centre, San Francisco, USA
www.game-connection.com
Next stop GDC and USA for the popular B2B meeting place event.

APRIL 2008

MCV INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS
April 10th, London, UK
www.mcvuk.com

MAY 2008

NORDIC GAME CONFERENCE
May 14th and 15th
Malmo, Sweden
www.nordicgame.com

JUNE 2008

GAMEHORIZON CONFERENCE 2008
June 18th and 19th
Newcastle, UK
www.gamehorizon.net

JULY 2008

DEVELOP IN BRIGHTON
July 15th to 17th
Brighton, UK
www.developconference.com

DEVELOP INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS
July 16th
Brighton, UK
www.developmag.com/develop-awards

XNA GAMEFEST
July 22nd and 23rd
Seattle, USA
www.xnagamefest.com

AUGUST 2008

SIGGRAPH
August 11th to 15th
Los Angeles, USA
www.siggraph.org

GAMES CONVENTION
August 20th to 24th
Leipzig, German
www.gc-germany.com

SEPTEMBER 2008

AUSTIN GDC
September 15th to 18th
Texas, USA
www.gdconf.com

OCTOBER 2008

TOKYO GAME SHOW
October 9th to 12th
Tokyo, Japan
tgs.cesa.org.jp/english/

VARIABLE DECLARATIONS

by Owain Bennallack

This Christmas a gift for fans of new IP

Are we about to unwrap one of the killer franchises of tomorrow? After years of the sort of déjà vu that can only be inspired by working in a wintry wasteland for a suspected alcoholic with a singular and dated taste in fashion who smells of rutting deer, Santa's little helpers might look twice at the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 boxes they stuff into sacks this Christmas.

Plenty of the names will be unfamiliar: In the most exciting fourth quarter for years, the now established next-gen consoles are set to play host to dozens of decent games, of which a surprising number are brand new properties.

The gift-buying season may be bookended by *Halo 3* (still sure to feature on many Christmas lists) and next year's *GTA IV*, but the months between will see the release of *Assassin's Creed*, *Mass Effect*, *Haze*, *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men* and *Army of Two*, to name but a few.

Eidos and IO's Kane and Lynch is a new property for next-gen consoles. It's just one of a clutch that have appeared this Q4, time will tell how many of them are left standing for Q4 2008

PROPERTY MARKET

What happened? Did industry executives notice the innovation-inspired success of Nintendo's Wii and DS platforms and vow to do their bit? Or have publishers decided the best way to beat the deep pockets and brands of Electronic Arts is to create something its money can't buy (the mega-publisher's investment in Ubisoft notwithstanding).

All that, but much more, too. This new crop of homegrown brands got the green light a few years ago, after all. And readers with robust memories might recall the growing disillusionment with movie licences emerging back then.

As William Latham wrote in Develop 2004's October edition: "Hollywood appears to be getting a bit grouchy with the games publishers – for example, Warner Bros has set up its own games division (again) and is getting tough on the quality of games that exploit its IP. The prices of movie licenses are also going up, and furthermore Hollywood never gives enough time for the game to be made [...] In short, the honeymoon is over, the marital rows have begun."

E3 2006 saw EA let the James Bond licence go to Activision and its most powerful executives talking about original games. EA's president of Worldwide Studios, V. Paul Lee, for instance, told *The New York Times* the publisher wanted to grow the proportion of revenues generated from its internally developed IP from 40 to 50 per cent.

> ***"Carrying leading game brands from one generation to the next has a mixed history..."***

But for all EA's manoeuvres with the handbrake, it's Ubisoft that has longest been the most credible champion of original, internally developed IP. TV ads composed entirely of in-game footage for *Assassin's Creed* are just the most recent manifestation of the French outfit's long-running confidence in – and almost philosophical commitment to – its self-originated game brands.

There are also cyclical reasons that make this the best time to launch a new game property. Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 have established themselves (even if publisher strategists predicted a larger Sony installed base by now) while on-going high prices mean the market is still tilted towards the hardcore early adopters most amenable by novel content.

Furthermore, carrying leading game brands from one generation to the next has a mixed history. *Crash Bandicoot* and *Tomb Raider* were both PlayStation mascots that lost the limelight to newcomers on subsequent generations. *Halo 3* has seen Microsoft manage the transition; we'll have to wait until March to see about *GTA IV*.

SHOCK OF THE NEW

It all makes for a fascinating few months. Hardcore gamers and the specialist press have the original games they perennially demand, and plenty of choice, too; a common focus on character and narrative apart, the key games are hardly the cookie cutter clones of yesteryear.

Will the new IPs triumph? Congestion at the tills means second choice purchases will be spread thin, and for all its original gameplay, the key game of the period, *Super Mario Galaxy*, can hardly be called a new property.

More pertinently, the bookie's favourite for Christmas number one remains EA's *Need for Speed ProStreet*, with *FIFA 08* second. In third place is *Halo 3*, which like *GTA IV* is a juicy reminder of the rewards of getting a new brand established.

Equally compelling evidence is still on the Christmas shelves in the shape of the Half-life compendium, *The Orange Box*. Like *BioShock* earlier this year, Valve's game continues to show what original game IP is creatively capable of, as long as it gets the opportunity and resources to shine.

Such titles are the highest value chips in the publishing game. Only a couple of the upcoming crop of new IPs will still be with us in years to come, after all. For gamers, everyone's a winner this Christmas. But according to their fortunes, publishers will likely greet the New Year with very mixed views about original content.

Owain Bennallack is executive editor of *Develop*. He edited the magazine from its launch until its February 2006 issue. He has also worked at *MCV* and *Edge*, and has provided consultancy and evaluation services to several leading developers and publishers. He is also chairman of the *Develop* conference advisory board.

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DESIGN DOC

by The Aplenwolf

The Perils of Publishers

Many games under development never see the light of day. This can be the result of inept developers who simply aren't capable of finishing what they started, or sometimes it's merely a lack of resources catching up with the development team. But even the most competent game developers can be caught off-guard by what's happening at the next level; when whales start thrashing around in their death throes, a lot of smaller fish often get smashed to bits in the chaos.

I've been (un)lucky enough to have two past projects canceled in mid-development thanks to publishers either going out of business or shutting down a significant part of their operations. More recently, I've had a Wii design get put on hold due to an executive shake-up and so a game that has been approved and should be six months into development instead continues to languish in the greenlight process, waiting to get approved for a second time by the very same publisher.

This sort of thing happens. It's damn near unavoidable if you're in the business long enough. So I'm not complaining, merely pointing out an aspect of the business that is very seldom mentioned by the executive producers and vice presidents of development who are making a pitch for signing your game with his company. The dynamic nature of the game industry is one of the things that makes it exciting, but it is that very dynamism that occasionally throws a monkey wrench into the development process.

Consider some of the better-known publishing names in gaming history: SSI, Origin Systems, Sierra, GT Interactive, Infocom. They're all gone, and even if aspects of them live on in newer companies such as Vivendi and Electronic Arts, their disappearance represents corporate turmoil of the sort that has made an impact on the development of dozens, if not hundreds, of games.

For the independent developer, the cost of a publisher going out of business, being acquired or even undergoing a relatively minor restructuring can be substantial. A change in decision-making executives will usually require a review of all the games in the various stages of approval and development, which can cause a delay of months before that all-important next cheque arrives. This is problematic enough, but even worse, because publishers are aware that developers are often living paycheck-to-paycheck, it is not exactly unheard of for unscrupulous, cash-strapped publishers to take advantage of this situation in order to relieve their own financial pressures.

"Changing execs will usually require a review of all the games in various stages of approval..."

And while it's upsetting to be unable to complete a game on which your development team has labored hard for months, or even years, it's significantly more disturbing to see the entire business crumble and disappear into the obscure history of forgotten game developers.

Development houses have lifespans, just like every other form of corporate entity, and having a publisher who is both fair and financially stable is one of the key components of extending that lifespan.

Here are four factors to keep in mind:

1. Bigger is not always better.
The larger and more established publishers often have corporate owners whose strategic decisions can have a serious impact on product development and have nothing to do with your game or its potential.

2. Know the decision makers.
It doesn't matter how good your relationship is with someone at the producer level or how great he thinks your game would be if the folks who run the numbers don't think they can sell it. But each publisher has its own unique mindset, so do your homework, learn who calls the shots and try to position your project accordingly.

3. Relationships matter.
No game makes it through the process without a champion. This usually isn't a decision maker, but it's someone who will make the case for your game to those who do make the decisions. The more committed your champion is, the more likely it is that your game will be approved. If you don't have a real champion, you probably won't end up with a signed contract either.

4. Research the finance.
There's a certain amount of BS in the industry and it's not all on the development side. Very few publishers actually have as much development money allocated as they claim when they are shopping for developers.

Of course, none of this applies to the developer who only has one publisher interested in his project and therefore no real choice available to him. A suboptimal publisher who is willing to fund the development of your game is always to be preferred to the perfect one who has no interest in it. But at the very least, you can still enter even the most risky publishing relationship with your eyes open, aware of the risks, and give yourself a chance of extricating you and your team with a minimum of distress and damage.

The Alpenwolf is a professional game designer who has been active in the industry for 17 years and designed games for some of the largest American and Japanese publishers. He has been known to visit Ironforge in the company of a large white wolf. design@alpenwolf.com

SMART BOMB

by Gillian Cordall

Driving the brand

There's big excitement in the world of the sensible hatchback. The Toyota Yaris now comes with additional extras which would encourage many of us to clamour for a test drive at our nearest Toyota dealership. I am, of course, referring to a giant tentacle which reaches out of the sunroof and shoots at the kind of anti-social road users which are, sadly, all too common these days on our public roads: namely toasters, robotic rabbits and bike-riding sumo wrestlers.

Unfortunately this special edition is only available in the US and Canada and even more unfortunate for those of us stuck in rush hour traffic, where a giant tentacle would undoubtedly be of great use, this option is only available on the model in *Yaris*, an Xbox Live Arcade game.

Disappointing as this is for drivers in the real world, news of this game still caused something of a stir in the mainstream press, perhaps as this is the first 'advergame' made available for free download on Xbox Live Arcade. It is not, however, the first advergame to appear on the platform and will not be the last. In June, PepsiCo announced the Unlock Xbox competition, inviting design entries for a Doritos themed Xbox Live Arcade game, while MTV is reported to be investing $500 million in creating games for consoles, the internet and mobile.

Toyota's Yaris advergame debuted on Xbox Live Arcade earlier this year

IT ALL ADS UP

So advergaming appears to be flavour of the month. There is nothing new in this: advergames – games specifically developed for the purpose of promoting a specific brand – have been around on the internet for years. And the use of games as a marketing tool in place of traditional forms of advertising, particularly TV, in order to reach the more elusive younger demographic has also been discussed at length in the marketing services industry. But advergames themselves often seemed to be overlooked by the games industry, with more emphasis being placed on product placement within established console and PC titles and the use of real time ad servers in networked games.

Perhaps this is about to change. And maybe the reason for this is the present generation of consoles and the success of more 'casual' games on platforms such as Xbox Live Arcade, which now make it possible (and affordable) for brand owners to create specific games for their products, which can be downloaded and played on consoles. Until the current generation, it was just not feasible to create bespoke advergames for consoles and product placement was the only real way of reaching console gamers. And product placement had its problems – the long lead time for titles, the difficulty for brand owners in controlling how their brand was used in the context of the overall development of the title, the danger that the introduction of the brand into an established title would backfire and that gamers would object to its inclusion. And, of course, there was always the cost and the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of the brand placement itself.

> ***"There are some issues in creating advergames for distribution on consoles…"***

But with a bespoke game, specifically developed for the brand in question, many of these difficulties disappear. And there is the phenomenal success of the Burger King Xbox games, which demonstrate clearly their effectiveness and herald a way forward for the industry. The three games were commissioned by Burger King's advertising agency and developed by Blitz Games in the UK. Sold at Burger King outlets for $3.99 (with the purchase of a value meal) the games went on to sell 3.5 million copies in six weeks, making them at the time the third biggest selling game on the Xbox 360 platform. With those statistics, it is no wonder that brand owners are eager to emulate this success.

Yet, there are some specific issues involved in creating advergames for distribution on consoles, which brand owners need to bear in mind. They and their agencies will need to engage developers to create the games on their behalf – not least because those developers must be approved by the owner of the target platform, as well as having the skills and the tools to develop the game for that console. The games themselves also require prior concept approval by the platform owner, to ensure compliance with quality and other standards applicable to the console. Without that approval, development cannot go ahead.

If approval is given, the game will be subject to milestones and final testing by the platform owner, before it can be distributed on the console. Contracts will therefore need to be entered into with developers, covering off specifications, timescales, intellectual property ownership, brand owner involvement and, of course, payment. Additional costs, such as the platform owner's licence and distribution fees, need to be factored in and the games will require an age rating before they can be published and may need to be localised.

Just like a normal game, then.

All these issues need to be covered off at an early stage. But the potential upside may lead to increasing collaboration between the games and marketing industries and more opportunities for gamers to engage with brands on a more interactive basis. Meanwhile I'm off to book a test drive.

Gillian Cordall is Partner, IP & Technology Department at lawyer Maclay Murray & Spens LLP, based in London
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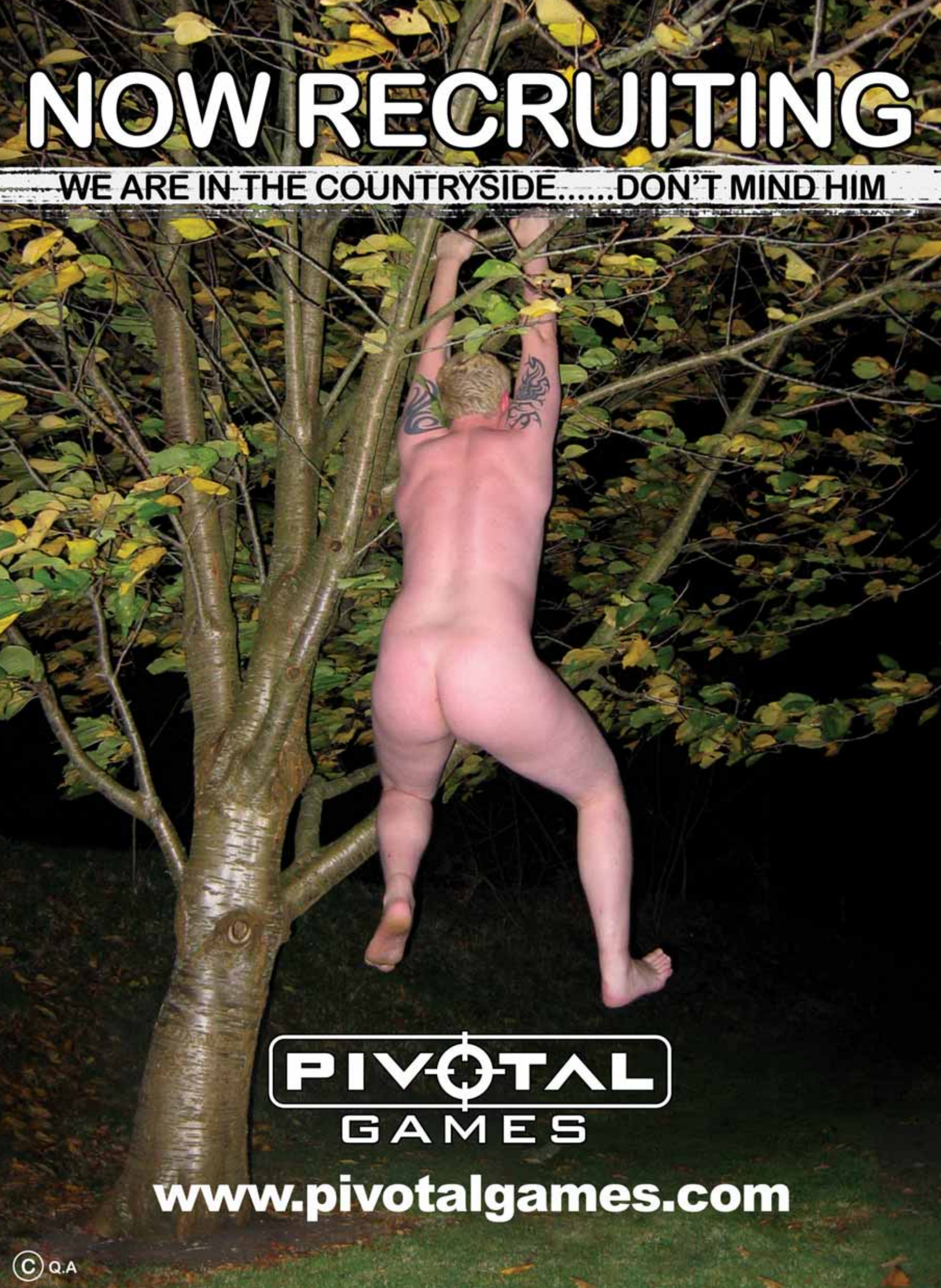
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Credit where

With the topic of tax rebates for developers raising eyebrows all over the world – from Australia to the EU – Guillaume de Fondaumière, president of French industry association APOM, looks back at how his country has fought for government attention and says that the argument video games have cultural relevance must be amplified and shared across Europe…

In October, thanks to an invitation from TIGA, I was able to attend both the BAFTAs and UKTI's Games Production and Globalisation seminar hosted by the Minister Digby, Lord Jones of Birmingham. I also heard Margaret Hodge's speech to the ELSPA AGM.

In those 48 hours I spent in London, I felt the (rare) privilege of having travelled several years back in time. Of course, the language and the landscape were different, but the discussions surrounding the threat posed by Canada's tax credits on UK's development community or the necessity to recognise the cultural nature of video games all sounded very familiar to me.

When I took the presidency of France's video game association APOM in April 2005, all discussions with the different government bodies concerning the measures to be taken to help our national industry were in a standstill. Almost three years had been spent analysing the situation with different government bodies – namely the loss of a good half of our workforce to Montreal – an intense work that culminated on May 13th 2005 with a meeting with M. Patrick Devedjian, then Minister of Industry. As much as the Minister sympathised with the situation and understood the competitive distortion, he had no solution but to advise us to take advantage of the R&D tax credit (far lower and restrictive in France than in the UK) and the €4m Multimedia Fund co-financed by his Ministry and the Ministry of Culture.

It was indeed a bitter day for French developers: after three years of battle and education by my predecessor to obtain a more meaningful answer to the challenge posed by a growing number of countries offering multiple incentives to support their industries, we had nothing.

It took a political earthquake two weeks later and a great number of efforts to put us back on track.

PLAYING WITH POLITICS

The earthquake I am referring to was France's 'no' to the European Treaty and the arrival of a new government lead by Dominique de Villepin. In June 2005, I sent a letter to the Prime Minister and explained thoroughly why we believed it was important for his government to take a more pro-active approach on the subject: the social impact of video games on the younger generation, its economic and technological weight as well as the issues posed by globalisation on our industry and, last but not least, the growing importance of our media as a form of cultural expression.

I believe some of the focus points must have appeared 'politically interesting' to the new Prime Minister and his response came quickly. Not only did he sympathise with the development community, but he truly wanted France to react to the Montreal challenge.

I had sent a similar letter to the Minister of Culture who received us promptly and we re-launched work with different services of his ministry, in particular the Centre National de la Cinématographie, France's Film Office, on a Production Tax Credit of 20 per cent. This was half of what Canada was offering, but enough to restore confidence and stop the bleeding.

"I am not sure what this 'cultural box' ISFE or Margaret Hodge refer to, but I know for sure that video games have become a major entertainment form…"

At that point in time, the SELL (the French counterpart to ELSPA) was a vibrant advocate of the measure, lead as it was by Ubisoft's Geoffroy Sardin.

With the help of Ubisoft, the SELL and the CNC, and thanks to a French MP who also sympathised with our concerns, we were able to organise a colloquium in the French parliament in September 2005. It proved an important event as it gave us the opportunity to present our sector and its challenges to an audience which, mostly, never had played games nor understood what this industry was about.

A few weeks later, the Minister of Culture himself addressed the MPs during a parliamentary session and declared 'officially' that video games were a form of cultural expression, just like films. Video games had been unequivocally recognised in France as culture, a first true victory after three years of lobbying.

It took us another 15 months, many more meetings and hurdles to cross to obtain a bill with the promised 20 per cent tax credit from the French Parliament. In a country where the opposition almost systematically votes against any bill presented by the governing majority, the video game production tax credit passed with the votes of both majority and opposition, with only the communist party abstaining. This was a demonstration of the lobbying work APOM undertook during this period to convince all MPs that this tax credit was of vital importance for our industry. The measure, however, is still not in place as we are waiting for a green light from Brussels.

On the European side, following an official transmission by France of a detailed description of the envisaged tax credit, the DG competition launched an official Public Enquiry in December 2006. It is a procedure launched by the EU in parallel to its own investigations and analysis on the conformity with the European law and treaties of a public aid, whereby members of the public, organisations or government bodies can bring forward arguments in favour or against the said aid.

Surprisingly for us, to my knowledge, the only organisation to present arguments against the French tax credit came from the ISFE, the Interactive Software Federation of Europe, the 'mother body' of ELSPA and SELL. When I say 'surprisingly' I mean that it came as a surprise to us following SELL's constant support for more than five years to introduce a mechanism to counter the distortion of competition created by Montreal's tax credit and more specifically since two years on a production tax credit in France.

THE CULTURAL TEST

It took us a while to understand the real motivations of certain ISFE members for fighting the tax credit – namely software is patentable and copy protectable – however the frontline arguments brought forward by the ISFE can be summarised as follows:

1) Games don't belong in a cultural box. Games are software by nature, not a form of cultural expression like movies.

it's due

2) Developers would inevitably stop producing games that meet market expectations to focus on productions that fit the cultural test necessary to obtain tax credits.

3) Such a tax credit would create a distortion of competition within the EU and therefore shall be forbidden by the DG competition.

I believe that the time has come for these three points to be publicly discussed within the European video games industry. As we are becoming a mature and structured business, I think it is high time all parties involved, in particular independent developers, production and publishing executives from small and large international publishers – be they European or not – discuss these topics thoroughly. In short, my point of view on the three mentioned points is as follows:

1. Do games belong in a cultural box?
I am not sure what this 'cultural box' ISFE or State Minister Margaret Hodge refer to, but I know for sure that video games have become in recent years a major entertainment form.

I also know that a great number of video games not only are inspired by major motion pictures or books, but that they today in turn inspire a wealth of cultural forms of expression (films, books, paintings…).

When I read interviews of some of the most recognised (and successful) game makers today, I also see that a great number of them perceive themselves as fully fledged creators in their own right.

I sense as well that most developers and a great number of senior production executives or studio heads at major international publishers do feel they are part of a culturally vibrant industry rather than of the conventional software or toy makers' one.

Foremostly though, I see a true new language emerge – interactivity – with its own grammar and vocabulary, a form of expression that transcends cultures and races and is experienced by billions worldwide.

I also see the growing debate over violence or sex in games and I ask myself: "If games are software, what exactly is our argument for not banning certain games? Freedom of expression?"

2. Would developers have to stop producing games that meet market expectations to focus on productions that only fit the cultural test?
First of all, I would like to re-iterate that my organisation would of course favour a mechanism whereby all games, regardless of nature, size or content would benefit from a tax credit, as it exists for instance in Montreal.

This kind of tax credit proves universally beneficial, whatever the industry or country. Many countries in the world have adopted or are about to adopt this kind of tax incentive and not only successfully stimulate their local video game industry, but also woo international productions; it only seems natural for Europe to react and offer similar incentives.

The EU commission so far refuses to recognise that video games as a whole are a cultural sector. Therefore, games cannot benefit from the 'cultural exception' clauses of the EU treaties, essential to obtain any sector specific state aids. The DG competition, however, seems to be inclined to accept that certain games, responding to objective cultural criteria, be recognised as cultural and therefore be eligible to specific government aids.

If the European video games industry considers it is under threat because of other countries tax incentives (to me the obvious), we are put in front of a difficult choice: either we accept the EU commission's current position and certain games will be able to benefit from tax credits, or we reject the process as a whole and lobby extensively the Commission to obtain a full cultural recognition of video games.

Now I understand that the 'objective cultural criteria' that the EU commission would like to establish are already in place for the film sector in a number of European countries.

Films in the UK, the Netherlands and Germany for instance can only benefit form tax credits if they successfully pass such test; I would like to encourage all of you to take a look at these tests to understand more precisely what they are about and to analyse how many games produced in Europe could benefit from tax credits were they to pass such comparable tests.

Based on the analysis of said tests, and even if I am inclined to accept the argument that the one for video games might be more rigid than those for movies (they differ from country to country), I believe that games that *are* 'culturally relevant' will be plenty, and can of course meet markets demand. And if a developer does not want to be bound to such test and/or produce a 'culturally approved title', it will have the free choice to produce its game out of this context, as we all do today.

Finally, I believe that the cultural recognition of games will only increase with time and that more and more productions will be able to benefit from tax credits. I think we shall all consider this as a first step in the right direction, instead of being passively subjected to the current production drain to Canada or Asia.

3) A tax credit would create a distortion of competition *within* the EU.
This argument was largely debated during the games seminar hosted by UKTI on October 24th and I couldn't agree more with the conclusion to this discussion expressed by UK's Minister for Trade and Investment Digby, Lord Jones of Birmingham: the distortion of competition comes from the outside (most notably Canada) and Europe has to respond to this threat by allowing our different governments to put any mechanisms in place they deem necessary to protect and grow their national industry.

If the EU commission accepts France's proposal, all countries in Europe will be able to put similar mechanisms in place. It will then be the responsibility of the different governments to effectively grant to their local sector tax credits or not. France's tax credit does not represent a threat to other countries within the EU – on the contrary, it represents an opportunity to react to the challenges of a globalised and highly competitive economy.

The debate that is currently stirring in the UK on these different subjects is a very welcomed one and I hope that it will rapidly lead to a strong and unified consensus by developers and publishers across Europe.

***Guillaume de Fondaumière** is the president of French games development trade association APOM and is also co-CEO of developer Quantic Dream*

Best in show

Found this issue in your Lyon GDC delegate bag? Here's our editors' highlights for the inaugual event's sessions…

Lyon GameDevelopers Conference

MONDAY, DECEMBER 3RD

9.00 - 10.00: KEYNOTE: The Making of Crysis
Crytek MD Cevat Yerli looks back at how his studio's new title evolved to become one of the most talked about PC games of recent times, looking at the team's approach to non-linear gameplay design and bringing an innovative concept to life.

10.15 - 11.15: Competing With Free (Business/Management)
David Edery of Microsoft's Xbox Live Arcade team examines how studios can compete with the rising tide of free content, from microtransaction- and ad-supported titles and plus retro rereleases and user-made content.

11.30 - 12.30: An Inside Look at the Business of Casual Games (Business/Management)
The Casual Games Association's Jessica Tams offers up an overview of the inner workings of the casual games industry with information to help developers understand the pros and cons of the $2.25bn market.

13.30 - 14.30: Shared Design (Game Design)
Crystal Dynamics' Arnab Basu and Riley Cooper look 'through the lens of design and production' to examine the best practices used at their studio for ensuring new concept development goes well.

14.45 - 15.45: One Console Future (Business/Management)
Denis Dyack of Sillicon Knights argues the case for what he calls a foregone conclusion for the future of game development: "a standardized, one-console future that will allow for mainstream broadening".

16.00 - 17.00: Visual Storytelling (Art)
Independent art director Viktor Antonov looks at how studios can use the new powerful consoles at their disposal not just for pretty graphics, but for visuals that can relay details and tell a story in their own right.

17.15 - 18.15: Is it fun yet? (Game Design)
NCsoft's Janus Anderson (creative director) and Dallas Snell (director of business development) discuss how developers could use player metrics to analyse the 'fun factor' in a game improve the quality of the title.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4TH

9.00 - 10.00: KEYNOTE: Rayman and the Raving Rabbids
Key Ubisoft execs Nicolas Normandon (creative director) and Loïc Gounon (international product manager) look at how the publisher established a new franchise using social fun from minigames and 'absurd humour'.

10.15 - 11.15: Marketing Your Development Studio (Business/Management)
Kuju's Ian Baverstock takes attendees through the company's decision to go from a singular brand to a multi-branded collection of studios and offers advice on how to self-publicise your studio to publishers.

11.30 - 12.30: Research Sessions (Programming)
Two short sessions: the first sees Pascal Barla discusses rendering for interactive applications; the second sees Arnaud Carré (Darkworks) and Hubert Sarret (Kylotonn) publicly discuss Play All (*revealed on page 5*).

13.30 - 14.30: Scrumming the Big Teams (Production/Project Management)
Ubisoft Annecy's Stéphane Baudet talks through how the publisher's development team has implemented SCRUM, introducing the small production unit approach to a bigger organisation, and the benefits it has reaped.

14.45 - 15.45: A Potted History of Four Years of EyeToy Technology Development (Programming)
Mark Lintott from SCEE examines how Sony's camera tech has evolved since its release.

16.00 - 17.00: Memories of Emotions and Emotions of Memories (Game Design)
Darkworks' Antoine Villette looks at how developers can move beyond creating good-looking if hollow characters to emotion-evoking characters, which can be narrators as strong as any screenplay.

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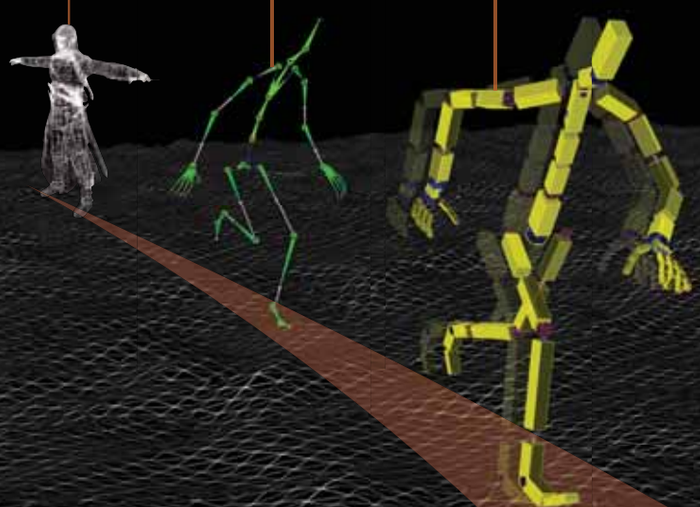

HOW UBISOFT GAVE AN ASSASSIN HIS SOUL.

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BETA

DEVELOPMENT FEATURES, INTERVIEWS, ESSAYS & MORE

"A lot of other engines have a PC heritage..."
Bryan Marshall, CTO, Codemasters, p41

Services and outsourcing roundtable
p26

Multiformat development advice
p36

Codemasters' plans for the future
p38

Platforms for success?

SPECIAL REPORT: The trials of multiplatform development, p31

Mick Morris: managing director of motion-capture supplier Audiomotion

Richard Scott: managing director of animation house Axis Animation

Andy Emery: managing director of audio specialists Side

The high-definition complexity of today's games mean that, unless you want a gargantuan team of hundreds, it's tempting to outsource certain aspects of production to specialist companies. Develop caught up with the heads of three service companies to talk about recent changes in the field and how developers should approach the outsourcing process…

SERVICES WITH A SMILE

"We're now often doing as much dialogue work on demo material as we were for a lower budget PS2 title only a few years ago…"
Andy Emery, Side

Develop: Has the biggest focus for your games work of late been for 'next-gen' content?

Richard Scott: I think what next-gen means to me is high-end production values, competing with feature films – that's what the industry is striving for. I think that's why there's been an upsurge in demand for partners like ourselves, who have involvement in industries other than just the videogames one.

Andy Emery: Expectations have obviously risen, and it's really been an interesting time of trying to meet and manage those expectations with regards to budget. Not only has the quality threshold gone up, but so has quantity, so we're not just looking at improving the quality of however much content we were doing – we're looking at that and it multiplying by large amount.

Mick Morris: Budget is obviously a concern to anyone with growing team sizes, and we like to think on certain projects that we're an extension of the developer's art team. For example, now you can capture finger movement at the same time as the motion performance, so that saves time that can be better spent by animators polishing what we send back.

Scott: I think that the other interesting thing from our point of view is the increase in demand to do concept work, which is a whole new niche that has opened up for us. It's done largely because of the sort of money that goes into development – sometimes it'll migrate into being a trailer or promotional piece, and sometimes just stays internal.

But that's an interesting area, and it certainly introduces more collaboration between outsourcing partners and the developer/publisher than maybe might have appeared in the past where you'd get relatively last-minute phone calls with a requirement for something.

Emery: It's definitely becoming a more collaborative affair, and it has to be. For companies like ourselves, especially where there is a creative element involved, that always used to be a frustration. We too have seen the same thing, whereby we now often are doing as much dialogue, composition and sound design work on demo material as we were for a lower budget PS2 title only a few years ago.

Doing that focuses the attention on things like production pipelines and gives you that opportunity to say 'that worked well, that didn't work well, let's see how we can take that forward into production'. But it really has to be that collaborative nature. Because we work for a multitude of different publishers and developers, we might have ideas that we've learned from those guys that might help your project. And that is

"I think some developers might have had bad experiences with outsourcing and may have trouble trusting again…"
Mick Morris, AudioMotion

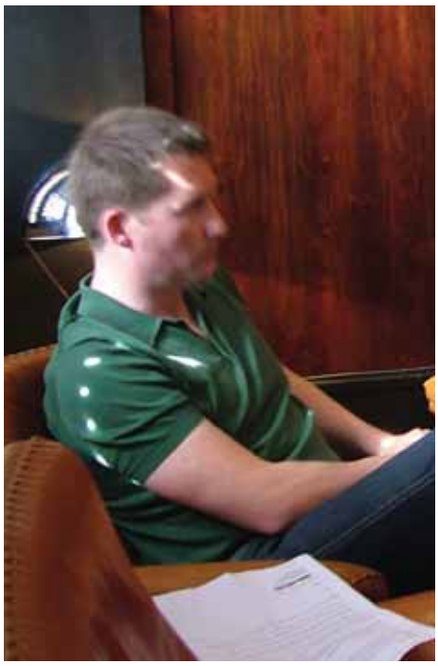
one of the key things that sometimes developers and publishers lose out on – that if we're doing a big job for Sega or Sony or Square Enix, we may have learnt something about production pipelines from one of the others that's a useful tool to bring into the chain.

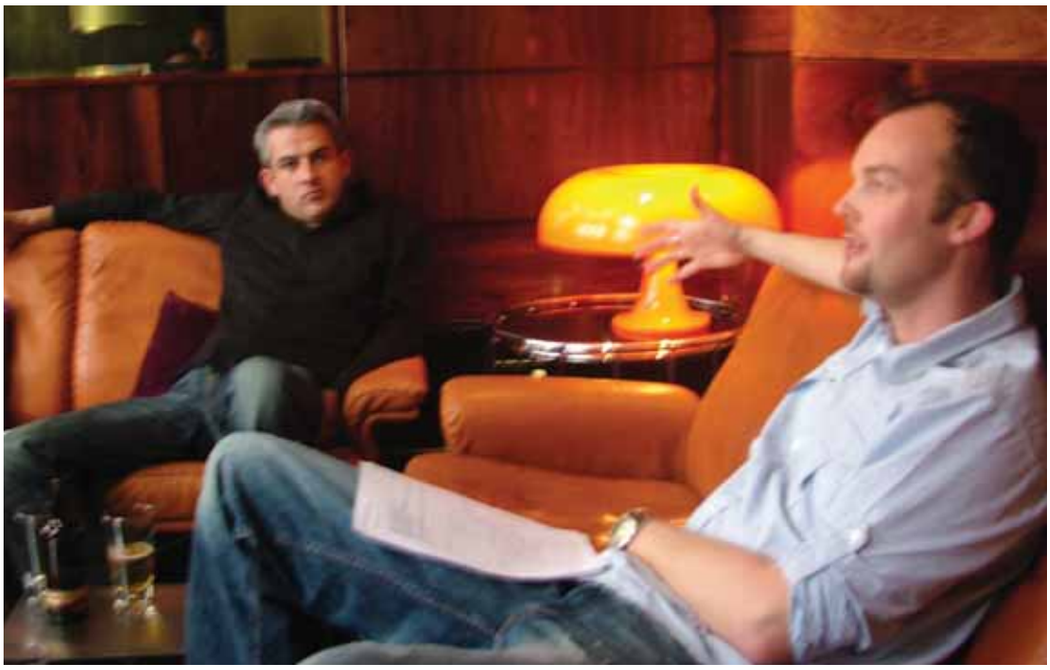
Do you feel the industry has started to move quicker now that outsourcing has become an accepted thing?
Emery: I think it was evolving all the time. A lot of the outsource services were truly a post-production process, and I think that's one of the things that's changed. And I think that if you're treated as a post-production element that you're restricted in what you can do.
Scott: I think that is the big difference, being less of a post-production element. That was a frustration of the previous set of processes – being that last-ditch phone call situation, whereas now it's a lot more about collaboration. It has to be a collaborative approach, or you won't get the best from your service provider.
Morris: I think that's where we're different – mocap has always been seen as something integral to the creation of the game from every early days. From even when characters are concept art, working with artists from very early stages, through the whole thing. Certainly there's a shift for us in that it's not so much demo stuff but certainly much longer periods of preproduction, where next-gen games are going through maybe 12 months or 18 months of pre-production before it has been green-lit. But I suppose with all of this there's a certain amount of risk involved, I guess we like to think that you're using us with our decade's experience, and that'll help eliminate some of the risk.
Emery: We all had to look at upping our game as well at this point of transition – it became apparent that there needed to be bigger teams involved, that people were looking at taking it even further than collaborative, giving a degree of ownership for part of a project. So we saw that we really needed to up our offering, and that's what we've done.
Scott: I think we're the same – we used to be a group of artists with a producer, but now we're multiple teams.

As developer teams have had to grow, putting that type of structure inside your team allows you to have people who mirror each other and communicate better. So if you've got an art director on your side, we've got an animation director on our side, and those two people have to get on the same wavelength as each other; get inside each other's heads. And the producers on both sides have to do the same. You have to mirror what's happening inside the development team as well to help with communication and help everyone feel confident about where responsibilities lie.

What are developers doing right, and what are they doing wrong?
Scott: I've noticed recently some of the newer teams have become much more structured in the briefs that they give you. In some of my experience working with games clients, there'd be these gigantic tome-like design documents, but when it came to briefing the service partners to do something, it was all a bit scant and lacking in information. We want tight briefs that give clear direction as to where there's scope to be creative and bring your input to the party. That's the most important thing, I think.

The other important thing is allowing a period of pre-production, which from our point of view has been generally where we are kicking the ideas around between our animation director and their creative team to evolve something that is going to answer the brief, be it from developer or marketing team, to hit that target. But you need time to mull it over, it's not good if they come with too many preconceived ideas, but it's similarly negative if you try and take too much control. They've been living with





this idea for a long time, so it's never good if you come storming in trying to take control.
Morris: I think the industry is attracting talent from other industries, which is serving to strengthen their teams with people from film, TV and scriptwriting.

When we started 10 years ago, there were definitely two different sectors in the industry – people in film looked down their noses at people in games. But now a lot of people aspire to work in video games because there's so much more creative freedom. And they're bringing in new working practices that developers of next-gen games are certainly benefiting from.
Emery: LucasArts is a company that's really learnt from its film heritage, and now their tighter integration with ILM is showing in their production pipeline. We've carried out casting work for them, and when it came to setting that up, it was quite clear that there was time to do a comprehensive casting process – we'd send them a huge list of CVs, then a shortlist, then two days of filmed castings that they would then review. That was all for just one lead character.

In the film business there's nothing indulgent about spending a mere two days to get the lead character, but if I suggested that to a lot of our other clients they'd say 'what are you talking about?' We've just done casting for another project of theirs, and it's going to be a few months yet before any additional work is done. That thinking early on is something that definitely comes from their heritage.
Scott: And having that foresight to engage with people like us in advance of anything really happening is important. We're happy to discuss projects way before they happen, exchange ideas we think might work. We're used to doing that in the broadcast sector, that's the nature of how it works, pitching ideas and writing treatments all the time. It's that willingness from our side to collaborate early that inspires it on the other side. And that's why I hate the word 'outsourcing' – it sounds like a cookie cutter thing.
Emery: So they add other words on, like 'outsourcing partner'.
Scott: Yeah, because that's what it is – a partnership.
Emery: If you feel like you're part of a collaborative process, it's only natural that that brings out the best from the indivdiauls involved. If you don't, it's fine, but you know that you're being used more as a service than anything.

> ***"I hate the word 'outsourcing' – it sounds like a cookie cutter thing…"***
> ***Richard Scott, Axis Animation***

What do you think is the cause of some studios being reluctant to outsource?
Scott: I think it's a control thing. And I can't say I blame them – I'd be the same in their shoes! But once you've gone through the experience, it's fine.
Morris: I think some might have had bad experiences and might have trouble trusting again. There is a perception with some animators that mocap is replacing hand animation, which isn't true, so some animators have been terrified of using mocap. But there are some things that it isn't suited to: at the end of the day, it's just another tool.
Emery: I think there's definitely been less of a reluctance to engage with external partners, which surely is driven by necessity. With the scale of projects these days, you just can't do it all. I think the change has been in a positive direction, and I think people are more receptive of it now.

Often mentioned in the same breath as outsourcing is the all-outsourced 'Hollywood model'. As outsource providers yourself, do you think we'll ever reach that stage?
Emery: I think games will always need more control and a bigger core team than films, just because of the complexity. As a linear media, film is more suited to that sort of model – it's not that Hollywood's just been doing it that way for longer. I can't imagine the development of a big title not having a pretty large core team.
Scott: And that's because of the technology requirement. To make that model work you'd have to have a technology team that could interface with all the other teams, and I don't know how viable that is. If you had the project management guys lumped together with the technology team, then it might work.
Morris: Realistically, a lot of development is done that way. As a business, AudioMotion isn't scared of calling in specialists for things that we don't do very well. We're not going to try and do these things that aren't our core area. And I think that's where we come in.
Emery: When we did *STALKER*, authentic weapon sounds were part of the requirements – so we managed a team in Texas, told them what was required and then worked on the stuff that we got. We didn't just go out with our DATs – we wanted someone who's done this 50 times before. It's the same thing.

Do you still feel like you're being told to "be like the movies"?
Emery: The reference point for audio has always been 'the movie score, those sound effects, those performances'. That's always been a benchmark people want to see achieved.
Scott: I think the days of being second-fiddle to the film industry are gone. People there are looking at what can be done in real-time in games and crying into their render farms. I think they're parallel now. They're two separate fields, but consumers expect a video game to be as good as – or better – than a film now.

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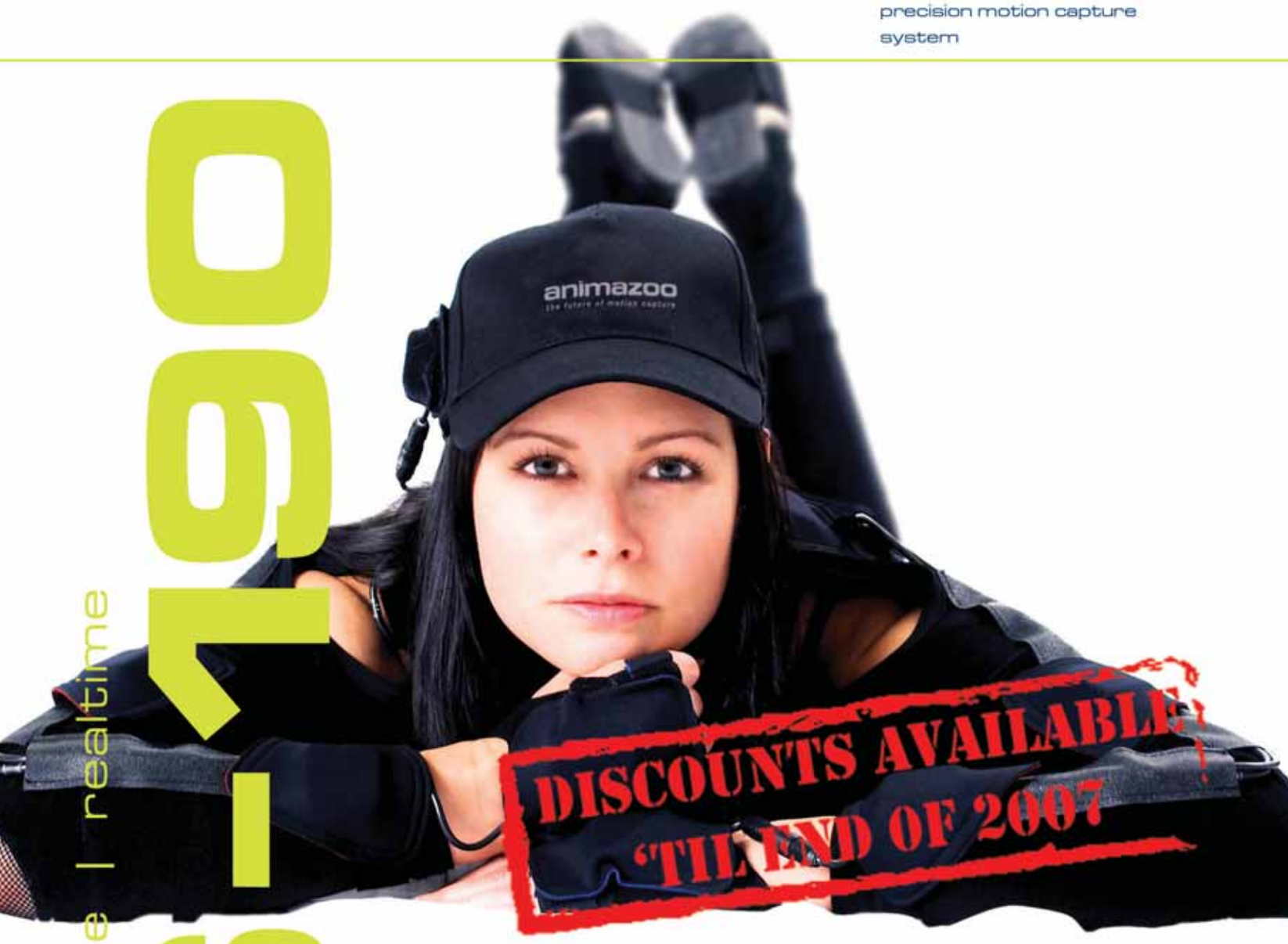

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MULTITALENTED

With release dates slipping as titles need 'further development time' and louder groans from coders regarding the trials of contemporary CPUs, Ed Fear looks at how the increasingly contradictory nature of development – with studios asked to make one game for a variety of different machines – has impacted the industry…

Looking at the current state of the game market, it's clear that the development sector is having a serious problem with multiplatform development.

Staggered releases have become more common: it's not unusual to see a PS3 version of a title ship a week or two after its 360 counterpart. But it can be even more severe than that – some titles are appearing on some formats months after they've appeared on another, with slippage as developers continually shift attentions between platforms impacting production schedules.

In addition, more and more developers are starting to speak out on the difficulties of being multiplatform developers in this latest generation – usually at the same time as they boast the large amount of work they've done on their own internal development frameworks to alleviate the situation.

There's even a feeling amongst some in the industry that simultaneous multiplatform development isn't possible with a single team any more.

"There's a feeling amongst some that simultaneous multiplatform development isn't possible any more…"

CHANGING SCOPE

Going back to basics for a moment, development for multiple platforms has traditionally always been done because it spreads the cost and resulting risk of games development across the biggest audience. With games now costing more to create, it would seem that this would be needed more now than ever before.

Similarly, though, with the large disparity between widely popular platforms such as the 360 and Wii, going cross-platform means more work, more ideas to exploit platform-specific quirks and similarly more money. But is it getting to a point where the benefit gained from going cross-platform is actually being outweighed by the cost – and is being a multiplatform developer really as hard as some say?

At first glance, it is clear that the very definition of 'multiplatform' is muddier than it ever was. While it could have previously been easily defined as the development of a similar-looking title on all of the 'big three's' platforms, Nintendo's decision to veer from the road of horsepower advancement and produce a largely last-generation specced machine has changed the playing field.

Similarly, with the PlayStation 2 enjoying a long tail in sales that none of its contemporaries managed, there's much to be said for developing on last-generation machines. And let's not forget the two wildly different handhelds while we're at

The PS3's massively multicore architecture has inspired complaints from some developers. Although it's not as if Sony doesn't know this, having instigated different moves to aid developers since the machine's launch. As we go to press SCE has just dropped the price of PS3 dev kits and incorporated a number of new, free SN Systems-made tools with the SDK

it, and the player interface differences that the Wii and DS bring to the table. Suddenly, 'multiformat' encompasses a set of vastly different standards of dizzying complexity. Or, as Eidos' chief technology officer Julien Merceron thinks of it, possibilities.

"Actually, all these platforms are quite exiting to support," he says. "You can generalise most games into two cases. The first case is that you're making a 'hardcore' game, in which case the chances are you might only target PC, Xbox 360 and PS3, and that's not hugely difficult.

"The other case is that, if you're making a mainstream game, you'd ideally like to support the Wii as well. In that situation, developing for the Wii in addition to the other formats isn't the easiest thing in the world – especially when each version needs to be cutting edge on their respective platform."

One way of reducing the complexity of the latter case, says Merceron, is to actually open up to even more platforms. That way, "you could potentially develop three sets of titles: one for PC/PS3/360, one for Wii/PS2/PSP and one for DS and mobile," he says.

CAUGHT IN THE NET

When taking a birds-eye view of the different 'this generation' consoles, it's tempting to generalise the differences based solely on performance: the Wii is weak, the PS3 is strong but the Cell poses architectural difficulties, and the Xbox 360 is powerful and less of an alien layout. But to do so would miss some of the other large issues, especially one such as online gameplay.

Kuju Sheffield rebranded itself as Chemistry earlier this year, and with it decided on Unreal Engine 3 exclusivity. And while that's certainly insulated the team from some of the pain of multiplatform development – "We've got Epic worrying about the technology, so we can be worrying about other things," says managing director Mike Cook – as studio manager Simeon Pashley explains, there are still significant issues to be worked around.

"The very big issue, we feel, is networking. There's no commonality on any of the platforms, even to the end-user, on what the experience is like," he says. "There are very obvious differences between Xbox Live, PlayStation Network and GameSpy or whatever other PC service you use."

> ***"Developing for the Wii in addition to other formats isn't the easiest thing in the world..."***
> ***Julien Merceron, CTO, Eidos***

As such, part of the network implementation focuses on just getting the same core experience right across all of the platforms, and working to create uniformity in the face of vastly different attitudes in the structures of the various networks. And that's before differentiating to take advantage of some of the other functionality provided by, say, Xbox Live. It's a another major point that has impacted the bottom line for next-gen game production.

Cook is keen to add that it's not just the developers that underestimate the cost per platform of implementing network play – the publishers are just as guilty of overlooking the complexity involved.

"It's a massive cost, and it will trip people up," he says. "It's not an easy thing to do by any means."

But isn't it a problem alleviated by the studio's use of Unreal Engine 3, though? "Sure, making maps is fine – that does come free with Unreal, so to speak. But things like lobbies, the matchmaking, the leader boards – it's a big job. The reality of using UE3 is that you're still developing for multiple platforms, and you have to play to those platforms' strengths and weaknesses."

REAL PROBLEMS

Interestingly, Unreal Engine 3 has in some ways become the poster child for both the ups and downs of multiplatform development. Which is understandable, given that it's often seen as a flexible, catch-all engine and has been epitomised by creator Epic's own *Gears of War* but also questioned by a lawsuit from licensee Silicon Knights. And then there's the chatter that, despite UE3's performance on Xbox 360, its PS3 showing struggled. At E3, Sony even pledged to work with Epic to get the engine working on PS3 with all guns blazing. Six months on, and how is the engine faring?

"Epic have done a lot of work on PS3 version of Unreal," explains Cook. "The engine was obviously PC and Xbox-lead, by a long way, but I think the effort both internally and with Sony has got the PS3 version of Unreal up to where it should be. It certainly looks the part."

Naturally, Mark Rein is confident about *Unreal Tournament 3*'s PC-equivalent performance on PS3, but admits that it has taken the production of one of Epic's own games to get UE3 to ship quality. "Like we did last year with *Gears of War* on the 360, we're kind of reaching

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CONSOLE GAMES

For many, the Xbox 360's real strength is its online service, the development backend for which provides studios with everything they need for matchmaking and multiplayer, a stark contrast to the Sony's open approach. Microsoft's walled garden attitude, however, coupled with SKU variations, has created problems for some developers – not knowing if users have hard drives is a deterrent to MMO firms, for one, and creates a disparity between the machine and rival PS3 when planning out development

version 1.0 of the technology for PlayStation 3. It's really exciting – it feels like we've reached a big milestone and hurdled way over it."

Epic's troubles are pertinent because more and more studios are turning to existing technology such as Unreal Engine 3 to facilitate development for multiple platforms. The alternative – building equal-footed technology for several different architectures and performance envelopes – is a job too large for many small- to medium-sized developers.

Merceron points out several reasons for why building a bespoke multiplatform engine is more difficult in this generation than it might have been in the past. "These days, experts are rare – losing one key person in your team can make things tough, to a greater extent than before. Not only that, but the scope of today's games is bigger: even console games are moving deeply into the online and social community spaces, an area where multiplatform needs to be applicable as well," he adds.

> ***"The big issue is networking. There is no commonality on any of the platforms on what the experience is like…"***
>
> ***Mike Cook, MD, Chemistry***

But it's not just building for the now that's important – despite only a year having passed since two of the current-gen platforms launched, Merceron believes that cross-generation development will be a big force in the future.

"Developers that are already trying to architect so that the core technologies can migrate to PS4, Wii 2 and Xbox 720," he says. "It's a very interesting trend, as it can really have a very positive impact for the company in about three years from now." (*And, as we reveal on page 6, this is a future Eidos itself is investing in.*)

OPENING THE FLOODGATE

So, what should those embarking on contemporary multiplatform development be careful of? Amongst the people we spoke to, advice on making sure you have a solid architecture featured strongly.

"It's correct that there's a lot of bespoke or tailored code, especially in the hardware intensive processes like graphics or audio, but it's definitely the case that when it comes to aspects like multithreading we've got an awful lot of common code," says Alex McLean, technical director at Pivotal, which itself has spent the past year building its own unified development base for 360, PS3 and PC. As such, it's important to make sure you have a solid underlying structure that's applicable across all of the platforms, so that platform-specific features can be abstracted out on top.

It's a point that Merceron agrees with: "Whatever your approach, anyone can trip up on architectural aspects. Architecture work is now extremely important so that you ensure the implementation will be robust and manageable. A poor low level architecture will generate a lot of multiplatform issues when designing the high level features."

Part of the problem that developers have had adopting to the high-end machines of late has been that of concurrency, the true power only obtainable when all of the cores or SPUs are working efficiently. As such, splitting big processes into smaller tasks and building a super-scheduler to manage them is a major priority for developers starting out.

"The SPUs are incredibly hard to program and optimise for," empathises Valery Carpentier, Emergent's EMEA field application engineer. "You have to write data to special parts of memory or it'll crash, you have to transfer memory yourself – it's a big nightmare."

It's a problem that Emergent saw coming early – not just that of programming for the PS3's unbalanced concurrent architecture, but developers having to plan how their game will work on anywhere from one processor to six. As a reaction, it developed Floodgate, a new but integral part of its Gamebryo engine aimed at helping game studios get the most performance out of parallel systems. Although it could be (somewhat unfairly) described as a scheduler, Floodgate is in actuality a system that manages processes running on different cores, keeping them thread-safe and their memory managed effectively – and scales from the six core PS3 through the Xbox 360 and even the Wii.

"When you've written the task program, you can tell Floodgate to run it on one SPU, two SPUs or even all five. It's as simple as that – you just say 'run this task on this many SPUs' and it will."

These 'Floodgate programs' can be written in pure C++ to ensure cross-platform compatibility and then later rewritten in chip-specific assembler during the optimisation stage. The benefit of Floodgate, says Carpentier, is that it allows people to get code running on multiple processors quickly – and that time saving, which Emergent says can amount to around 12 man-months, can be better spent optimising,

swapping tasks between cores or altering how many cores are working on the task.

Issues with getting code running correctly on multiple platforms are cause to most of the grumbles we hear today, but what about actual assets? Are there significant performance differences between the high-end consoles, or are they similar enough to this gen's stumbling block one of code?

> *"Could it be that studios who develop for PCs' shifting specs will be better prepared?"*

"If you build assets, they are sharable across multiple platforms, so that's where you win. Assets that you build are usable on multiple platforms. So long as you don't do something like 360 and DS, the platforms aren't that different – you can genuinely share assets between them all," says Chemistry's Pashley. "It's when you get down to the technical sides of things – the things players shouldn't care about – that's where there's differences that need to be addressed."

BUILDING THE FUTURE

Ultimately, however, even if there are performance differences, most developers are used to having scalable pipelines – it's not as if console specs have ever been identical. So in many respect it's possible that growing pains today are aiding future developments. Certainly there's historical precendent. Could it be the case that those developers with PC experience are better prepared, having dealt with flexible specs for a while now? When asking Mark Rein if he's ever thought that having a PC background has helped Epic Games with working on different architectures, his surprise is palpable. "No-one's ever mentioned that as a positive before – people used to see us as a PC company trying to make a go on consoles, and that's always been a hard selling point for our technology," he says.

"But yeah, we've been dealing with different system specs, different performance envelopes, different CPUs and GPUs for years, so it probably does make us better equipped – especially as these new systems, the 360 and PS3, are very similar in nature to high-end PCs in terms of some of the parts that they're using. So it's important to remember that we had this problem already on PC in a much larger way than we did on the consoles."

And so, as dual- and quad-core chips continue their onslaught into even entry-level PCs, there will come a time when a single-core chip is an anachronism and working in parallel is just the standard. The transition has been – and still is – a difficult one, for sure. But it's one that will gradually be overcome, leaving developers in a better place to squeeze every last drop of performance out of whatever architectures the future may build.

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ARCHITECTURAL ADVICE

Our contributors give their top tips for multiplatform development:

Mark Rein, Epic Games: "You will have to write and optimise native code no matter what engine or technology you may be using. You can't count on any middleware to insulate you from having to need expertise in areas like dealing directly with the graphics processor or CPUs."

Steve Tyson, Emergent: "We recommend to all our customers that they start on PS3, because it's the most 'different' platform. It's got such a weird architecture that it's much easier to go from PS3 to Xbox 360 than the other way around."

Julien Merceron, Eidos: "Make sure you plan for multiplatform way in advance. It can be a problem if you figure these performance differences one month before shipping your game, and you have to reverse engineer your assets and the platforms to understand what changes to make and how."

Simeon Pashley, Chemistry: "Ensure you fully understand the platforms at a technical level at the beginning, and their differences, so you can 'hide' that specialism. It's very easy to get something wrong, some really fundamental architecture or something, and then find that it just doesn't work on another system."

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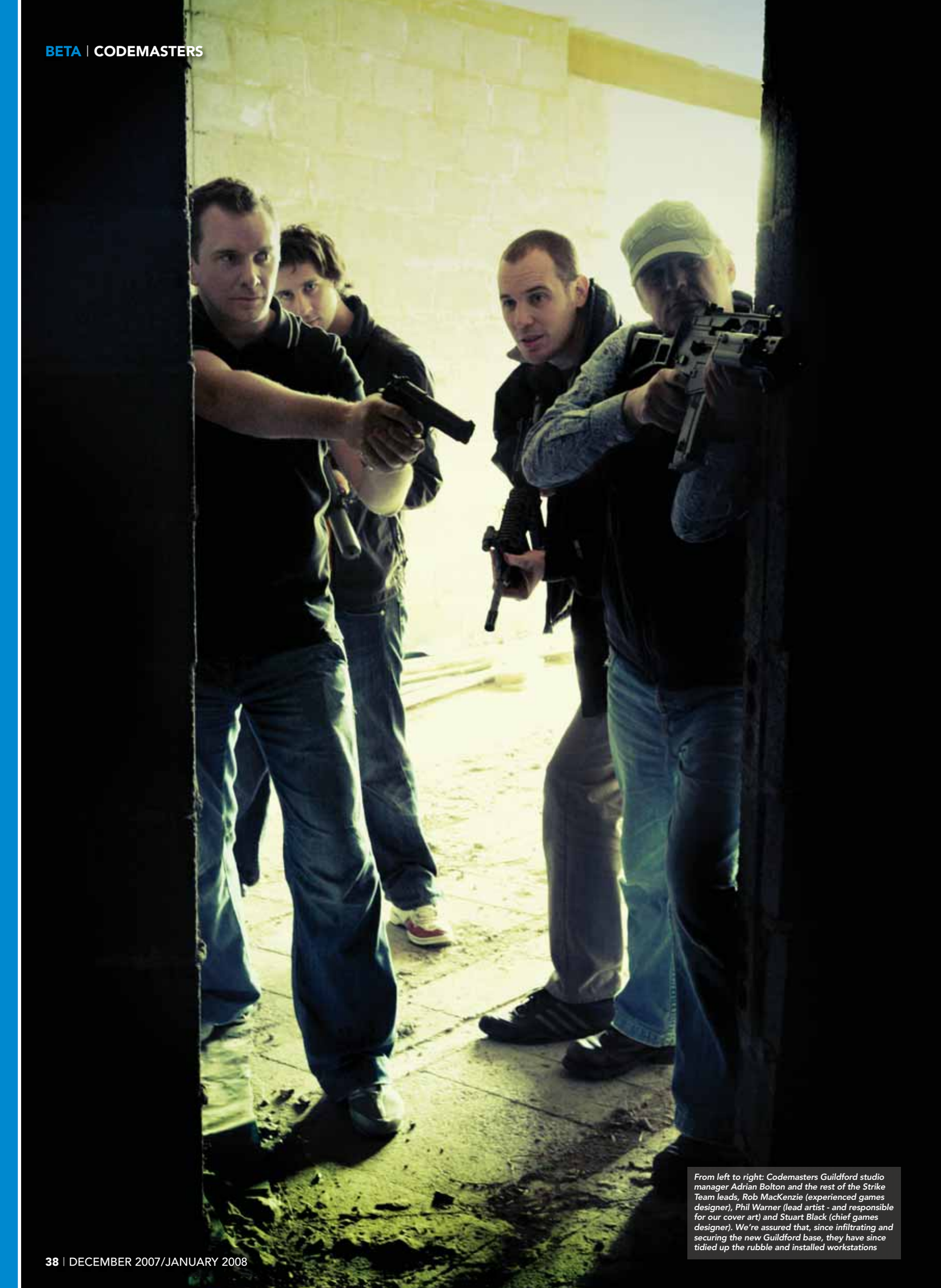

From left to right: Codemasters Guildford studio manager Adrian Bolton and the rest of the Strike Team leads, Rob MacKenzie (experienced games designer), Phil Warner (lead artist - and responsible for our cover art) and Stuart Black (chief games designer). We're assured that, since infiltrating and securing the new Guildford base, they have since tidied up the rubble and installed workstations

CODE WARRIORS

Codemasters has been a mainstay of the UK development scene, but now it has big plans for the future focused around new technology, new IP, and new talent. Michael French paid the exec team a visit to find out more…

"There's a lot of talk of the UK market shrinking and disappearing but that's not true at all – there are a lot of good stories out there and I think we are one of them," says Codemasters Studios' VP, Gavin Cheshire.

Surveying the UK Britsoft firm's past 12 months – and, indeed, its entire history – it's hard to disagree. In that time, Codemasters has continued to shine as a star of the UK development scene, continually building momentum and taking on new challenges while its contemporaries face mixed fortunes.

Most recently, the company has just announced rocketing revenues, thanks to success in UK, but also booming international sales – in part fuelled by *Colin McRae DiRT*, which topped the charts and secured the firm's first major US hit. Now, a possible IPO lies on the horizon next year to take the company overall forward once again. This itself would be a big enough ambition at the best of times – but the financial drive of the firm's publishing team and board of directors is being matched step by step by the ambitions of Codemasters Studios, the internal development teams at the company which Cheshire oversees.

Talking to people at the studio, it's clear that everyone feels that the studios part of the business has entered a new era, even if they don't explicitly say so.

With new technology, new talent, and new IPs on the cards, it's clear the success of *DiRT* and the potential of upcoming releases *Race Driver: GRID*, and *Operation Flashpoint 2*, has spurred the company on. And having proved that the team was capable of launching a praised, best-selling game for next-gen quickly in the hardware cycle, the publisher bosses have asked for more – setting out an ambitious mandate for Cheshire and co.: the team is to add a whole new game team to its internal operation every year from now on.

GUILD WARS

The first of these new teams appeared in August, but not at Codemasters' Southam, Warwickshire headquarters – instead the company set its sights on an additional base, opening a brand new studio in Guildford, and nabbing former EA Criterion development director Adrian Bolton to oversee it.

Originally, the Guildford studio was founded as a way to plug a staffing gap and provide extra development support to the team at the Warwickshire HQ.

"It's increasingly difficult to find all the talent we need in one area," concedes Cheshire, who acknowledges that while Codemasters has a great main base in Warwickshire for the HQ development team, it's still not enough to persuade some talent to sign up.

"Guildford gets us into a new area of the country and is ripe with talent," he adds. "We're not sitting here saying that we're going to poach from everybody, but we're going to offer something different to those people looking to work on something totally new, and also those people who won't want to move to other areas of the country."

But just months after opening, the Guildford studio is breaking out of its template, and graduating its role as a base to support games masterminded at HQ.

> ***"We offer something different to those looking to work on something genuinely new…"***
>
> ***Gavin Cheshire, Codemasters Studios' VP***

STRIKING OUT

Plans have quickly changed, and now to support Codemasters' ambitions, the growing Guildford team is being entrusted with what is a major step for any publisher – the establishing and development of a brand new IP. "All along we had this great new idea in the works, but simply not enough people to make it," explains Cheshire.

Codenamed 'Project Strike Team', *Develop* first reported on the project at the start of the year, when Codemasters was getting the word out to potential recruits that it has a special new project built straight from its Neon technology, although it still has yet to enter full production, as the internal teams at Southam were busy with *DiRT*, *Race Driver* and *Operation Flashpoint*.

While recruitment ads, comments by Cheshire and Bolton – and even our cover art which features Bolton and the Strike Team leads – hint at what style the game might be, they stop short on the details, only confirming that, at the moment, 'character-driven action game' is the best way to describe it. Or not describe it, because there's still much to be done in transferring it from concept to concrete game.

"There are some rumblings and speculation in the industry already about what exactly we're making," says Bolton, saying the new IP has been key to helping attract talent. "People are excited to try something genuinely new," he adds.

Left: Gavin Cheshire, VP of Codemasters Studios
Below: Adrian Bolton, studio manager of Codemasters Guildford

Interestingly, while the game seems to have a name and overall concept originally dreamt up by the developers at Southam, the finer points of its design are to be bashed out by the Guildford team. With the game due in 2009, there's clearly still some time to finalise the plan and plenty of long-term thinking – a challenge Bolton is looking forward to, and which he thinks will make for a better game.

"A lot has already been done on the groundwork, but I think that's a great benefit for the new team – they can now come in with some set parameters but start adding to it in their own way," he says. It's clear that the board of directors haven't handed the team instructions for a 'GTA clone', but rather simply set out a mandate for the development team to take its development skills and exploit them in the adventure/action category.

To make sure the move is a success, Bolton adds that team isn't embarking on a rush to staffing up the Guildford base, taking a more measured approach to help organically grow the studio and make sure that what could eventually be its signature game develops naturally.

"It's important to get the right people in the right positions," says Bolton explaining that while a number of key roles on the team have been filled, others are still open as the company seeks the right people to turn Strike Team from dream to reality. Although he stops short of explicitly

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New titles Operation Flashpoint 2 and Race Driver: GRID have helped take Codemasters' in-house technology, now called EGO, to the next level

saying he is planning to build a 'strike team' of his own, the game's codename and how it relates to his plan for Guildford is remarkably prescient.

MASTER MIND

But expansion is one thing. The smart way Codemasters is underpinning it is another entirely, because the Guildford team – and, indeed, its sister studio in Warwickshire – has an ace up its sleeve in the form of Codemasters' in-house technology.

Formerly called Neon, the proprietary Codemasters Studios middleware has been upgraded and significantly expanded since being built as a way to build *Colin McRae* for 360, PS3 and PC – and is now called EGO.

Developed by the studio's Central Technology Group, EGO is now the foundation for all of Codemasters' internally developed games, from *Race Driver: GRID* and *Operation Flashpoint 2* to 'Project Strike Team'.

In fact, it's clear that it was this – to use and expand on an already-stable technology base (which already powered a game to the top of the UK chart) – which tempted Bolton to move to Codemasters from Criterion.

"I've seen a lot of people try to do shared tech, and there's plenty of reasons not to do it. There's plenty of reasons why you shouldn't, because there are pressures to just get things done and out the door," he says. "Everyone in theory likes the idea, but in the practice, in the blood sweat and tears you just think 'we've just got to get the game finished' and the idea goes out the window."

On talking to Codemasters, however, Bolton says it was clear that the middleware had solved what was becoming for many a difficult task – making multiplatform games for PS3, Xbox 360 and PC (*which we've examined this month starting on page 31*).

"Everyone talks about vertical slices, but I've never seen a proper one," he adds, referring to an impressive tech demo of upcoming Codemasters titles: "*Race Driver: GRID*, that's the closest I've seen, and that's thanks to the technology"

Plus, he thinks Codemasters is in the perfect position and size to prove to the industry they can succeed where others have failed at what some have said is an impossible task due to the disparity between new formats.

"With EGO, we're able to test more aggressive ideas and unproven features much earlier..."

Adrian Bolton, Studio Manager, Codemasters Guildford

He says: "Looking at it from an outsider's point of view, I'm not convinced that many companies can do it. Structurally, most just can't do it. Many publishers just buy studios, and you can't retro-fit them with new technology. You need to be a certain size to get it right – not too big, but not small. So people have talked about this for years but they have never done it, but now we, a big company, are doing it correctly."

Given his history with EA, those are telling words – but also telling as to the size of the challenge Codemasters has conquered. EGO is now embedded in both the Codemasters UK studios and has united the company's developers across not just the country, but also the world, given that they have an art outsourcing studio in Kuala Lumpur as well.

EGO also gives Guildford, 'Strike Team' and its strike team a head start, says Bolton: "I don't want to build base level stuff every time. If I can effectively get 20 per cent of my game for free from reuse, and we don't have to write anything, that's great."

Chesire adds that that EGO has also solved one of the inherent contradictions of next-gen games development: "In making games for next-gen the time frames are still the same, but the budgets are bigger, the projects are bigger – if we can get this technology in earlier you can balance those things."

Adds Bolton: "It also helps balance the size of the teams, which is the biggest problem this industry has now, it's just mental. Culturally team size is a big deal – go over a hundred and it becomes very impersonal. People within that vast size can only impact one thing."

Creatively, having stable tech also gives the teams edge, says Bolton, saying EGO has allowed for much fast prototyping.

"You can get things running almost straight away. We've all seen lots of games by other companies hit production a month or two before they are due to ship with half the features not very good, whereas we're getting ideas tested really early. It's nasty and dirty – all very rough – but it allows us to get down the basics much earlier. We can try more aggressive features and ideas that are unproven. So much of games

development is taking the safe route because you don't have much time, but now that's a luxury for us," he adds, and it's clear that this will help support Guildford's task to thinking up and building ideas for Project Strike Team.

FUTURE PERFECT

In a wider sense for the entire Codemasters Studios operation, the big advantage of unified technology also means every game built on it helps improve the next, and every developer is gaining and adding back benefits as they work.

This is something which made the initial investment in the Neon engine and its EGO successor all the more worthwhile, says Cheshire – and which will help the whole firm in future.

"Not every third-party is in a position to devote resources to such an ambitious project and stay competitive," he says, adding that Codemasters' early investment means for cheaper production further down the line.

Engines tend to be "a double-whammy" says Cheshire – you're paying for a game to be produced, and then licensing technology on top of that – and he points out that sometimes middleware can turn up unwritten or unfinished when you first get it, just like your internally developed tools.

"If anything it's harder now to get a return on an individual format – you've got to spread your risk. So the notion that multi-format development is no longer truly possible is rubbish. It's about is getting the best out of each platform that you can; you have to make a bespoke game for each format, but each start in the same place."

All of which is key to the wider financial plans of the whole business going forward, plus Cheshire's aspirations for EGO as well which could see the tech shared with the external studios that have Codemasters publishing deals.

For those still doubting that the company's new IP and new tech gambit will succeed, Cheshire points out that the company had already beat many of its contemporaries to the next-gen goldmine with *DiRT*: "We're one of the few teams in all of games development that have actually produced a good triple-A game for all three platforms. So we've already done it, and we'll continue to pull ahead of the pack in future."

And given Codemasters has proven technology now backing that drive for talent and new ideas it is, again, hard to disagree with him.

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EGO BOOST

ALTHOUGH IN MANY RESPECTS it is just another studio's in-house technology, the evolution of Codemasters' proprietary middleware has certainly captured imaginations beyond the usual self-built tool – to the extent that Codemasters Studios VP Gavin Cheshire and CTO Bryan Marshall say it has helped attract talent to the studio from the US, Canada and Europe.

Originally called Neon, and first revealed in *Develop* last year, the engine garnered attentions much quicker and on a bigger scale than the team ever imagined, but a scale that matched the technology's ambitions.

"From day one it's been about a flexible, multi-genre, multi-platform approach," explains Marshall. "To do that has required a layered approach to the technology and each genre, so our racing teams and those working on something like *Operation Flashpoint* or other games can get the best use out of the engine, be that action or racing."

Key to the adoption of the technology amongst the studio has been building and installing it early in the console lifecycle – and also starting with a blank slate that ditched a lot of the tech that had gone before it.

"We laid out from the start that this was the direction that we needed to take and the opportunity on the market as it stood. We were able to convince our board of directors that it was the right thing to do," says Marshall.

Famously, Neon originally took cues from some SCEE code which enabled the studio's Central Technology Group to create something for seamless multiplatform development.

Adds Marshall: "We've not been held up by legacy code. With all due respect a lot of the other next-gen engines out there they have either a PC heritage or have their roots in single-threaded systems."

The rebrand to EGO seems to embody the fact that the technology is now very much Codemasters' creation and the thinking behind all its future development for the 'bigger' such as PS3, 360 and PC.

EGO's acceleration has meant the engine now boasts flexibility to create different environments, a better vehicle damage system, beefed up crowd mechanics – many of which are the finer details in racing games but are also very useful for creating terrain-based games or open world titles.

In line with this, Marshall's team has grown from six to 26, with a plan to add about four more. Those thirty people will help maintain, grow and adapt EGO as it becomes the brain of the development business at Codemasters.

All of which puts the company in excellent shape going forward, says Marshall: "There is a change in the market, because middleware was all about reducing your risk to getting a game to market; this is reducing your risk to middleware."

"We've not been held up by legacy code..."

Bryan Marshall, CTO

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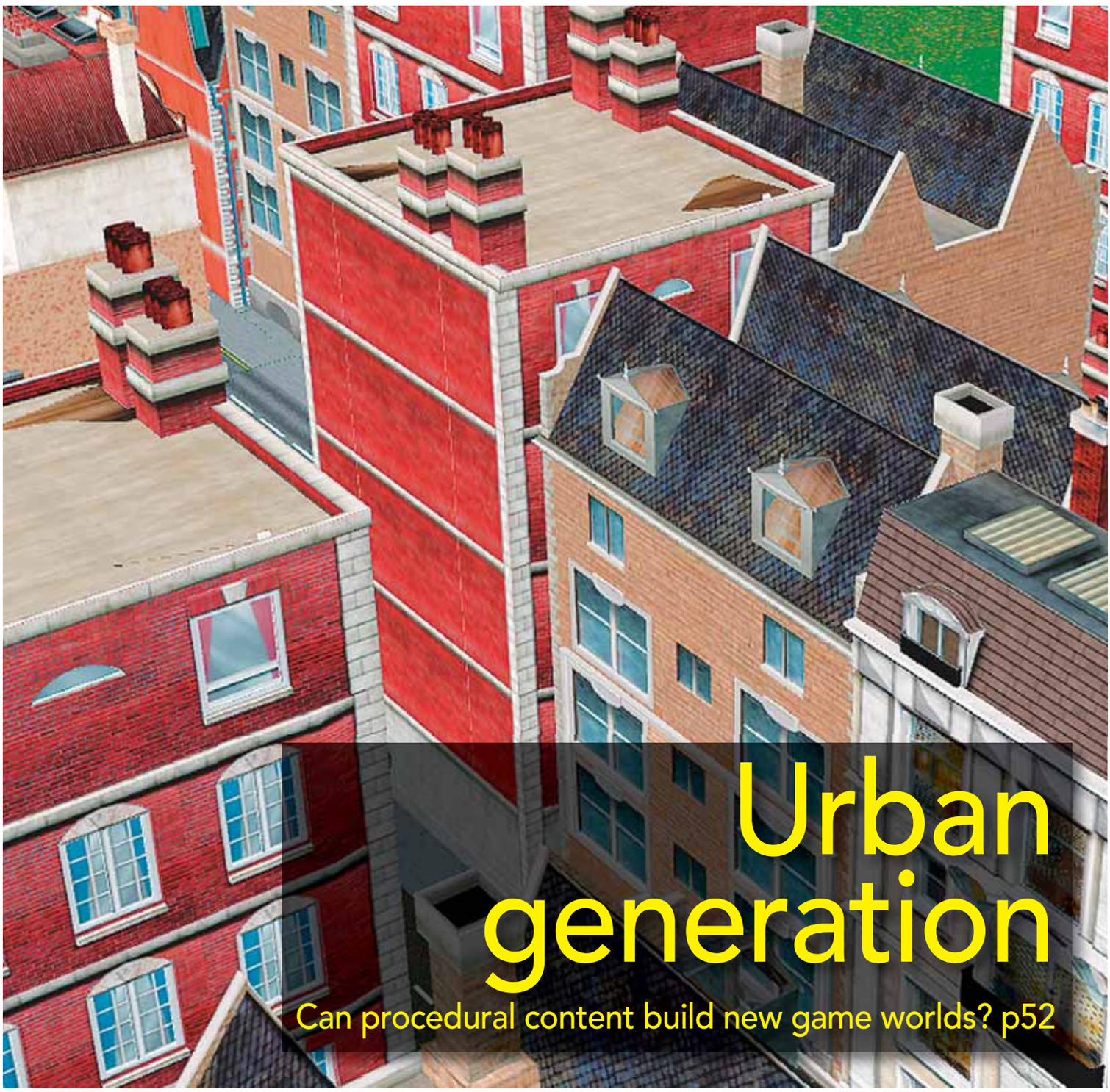


Urban generation

Can procedural content build new game worlds? p52

Concrete oaks from acorns?

IN A WORLD OF middleware that was becoming increasingly mature, it's good to see some new shoots.

Of course, setting up a company to create a procedural city generation engine as French company Gamr7 (*see page 52*) has done might be viewed by the cynics at the back is being slightly too ambitious. There's no question however that procedural art creation is a area that's being considered as one of the big potential opportunities over the next couple of years.

To an extent, it reminds me of artificial intelligence. There's plenty of clever people and blue sky thinking involved, but at the end of the day, getting a common-or-garden artist or programmer to use the blessed tool is always the hardest obstacle. That's why most AI middleware companies reduced their sights to the relatively uncontroversial field of pathfinding.

How the procedural technology market will pan out is another matter entirely and certainly one beyond this AI agent to predict. The idea of creating cities via the semantics of the buildings and their relationship to little computer people seems incredibly romantic though.

Still, it is worth pointing out that there is already an incredibly successful piece of procedural art technology in widespread use in the games industry.

Originally developed for the military sim market, IDV's SpeedTree is about as ubiquitous a tool as you'll likely to find outside the likes of Maya and 3ds Max. One reason is it handles a difficult niche of development at a price that means no-one's likely to try and create a proprietary solution, let alone try and compete. If anyone can do SpeedCity for $10,000, they'll be on to a certain winner.

Jon Jordan
jon.jordan@intentmedia.co.uk

< CODING >

CG HITS 2.0

Nvidia begins supporting the new generation of GPUs with shader language Mark 2…

CONSIDERING THE FIRST RELEASE of Nvidia's Cg (C for Graphics) high-level C-like graphics programming language was in 2002, it's fair to say technology has moved on a bit. Back then the arguments were about DirectX 8.1 versus DirectX 9, plus a bit of OpenGL 2.0 coming into view. Vertex and pixel shaders were considered fairly exotic.

Even the release of Cg 1.5 in the interim could only be considered a stopgap. Now, of course, DirectX 10 and the forthcoming (if slightly delayed) OpenGL 3.0 are all the rage, with the level of programmability and throughput of graphics cards massively increased. Still, the original reason for Cg's development – a cross-platform graphics platform from games, industrial design and movie and TV production that, in the words of Nvidia chief scientist David Kirk would enable everyone, not just the real rockstar programmers to do great work – remains as potent as ever. And that's the point of Cg 2.0, the beta of which is available from Nvidia's developer website.

The technology is wrapped up within the Cg Toolkit. The main SDK consists of a compiler for the Cg 2.0 language, runtime libraries for Nvidia's CgFX standalone shader viewer, as well as a user's manual, extensive documentation and examples. More importantly, also included are runtime libraries for DirectX and OpenGL, which support over 20 different profile targets.

Features in the release include DirectX 10-class features (although not strictly support for DX 10 hardware itself) such as a new API for constant buffers, geometry programs, texture arrays and true integer data types. On the OpenGL side, these are encapsulated in new profiles such as gp4vp, gp4gp, and gp4fp for GeForce 8 extensions, while new DirectX 9 profiles (hlslv and hlslf) cross-translate Cg to Microsoft's High Level Shading Language.

Supported operating systems range from Windows (32/64-bit, 2k/XP and Vista) to Linux (32/64-bit) and 64-bit Solaris. Mac OSes Tiger (10.4) and the recently released Leopard (10.5) are also covered. Compiler code generation and runtime performance has also been improved. Cg 2.0 is compatible with Cg 1.5 and available as binary distributions.
http://developer.nvidia.com

Cg 2.0 (beta)

Price: Free
Company: Nvidia
Contact: +44 (118) 903 3000

Multi-core Development Platform v3.0

Price: Available on request
Company: RapidMind
Contact: +01 519 885 5455
www.rapidmind.com

The push for programming parallelism continues to be a hot area of R&D. The latest release of RapidMind's Multi-core Development Platform targets new multi-core architectures from Intel and AMD as well as the Cell CPU and GPUs. It automatically enables single-threaded C++ applications to fully access multi-core processors. Standard coding methods are used with developers replacing the numerical types representing floating point numbers and integers with equivalent RapidMind platform types via the API. Deployment is handled by the backend, which deals with memory transfers and load balancing for each architecture.

GPU PerfStudio 1.1

Price: Free
Company: ATI (AMD)
Contact: +44 (0) 1908 487 547
ati.amd.com/developer/gpups/index.html

The new point release of ATI's GPU PerfStudio real-time performance analysis tool adds supports for DirectX 10, Vista and the ATI Radeon 2000 series. The presentation of data is improved with options for cell formatting, custom filters, and selectable UI anti-aliasing. Other enhancements include separate render target and backbuffer state overrides. No special drivers or code modifications are required and applications to be profiled can be executed locally or remotely. To use GPU PerfStudio you need to be running XP SP2/Vista32, with Radeon 9500 or better hardware (CrossFire not supported) and Catalyst 7.8 or 7.9.

< ART >

MOVING INTO CAPTURE

Realviz's encouraging you to Movimento with its multi-camera bundles

DESPITE MAKING ITS REPUTATION with stitching software for photographers, Realviz is consolidating its move into the highly competitive world of motion capture. The sector has been increasingly buoyant over the past 12 months. Movimento is another example that the threshold of performance and cost has been crossed.

An optical/marker-based system, Movimento is designed to combine the robustness of this hardware technology with the flexibility provided by 2D/3D tracking and and synchronisation software. Capture can occur either with static or moving cameras at resolutions ranging from VGA to 4K and framerates of 60 to 120 Hz. Indeed, you can use cameras running at different framerates and resolutions, should you so desire. The cameras for Movimento are provided by Canadian vendor Lumenera. Files can be exported for 3ds Max, Maya, XSI as well in the .fbx and .trc formats.

Realviz claims the system enables you to perform everything from facial capture, including lip synch, to full body capture and on set capture for special effect shots. It suggests four camera set ups for facial capture and eight cameras for full body sessions. The newly announced hardware bundles include a Intel Core Duo PC (running either Windows XP Pro or Linux), 150 GB SATA drives per camera, tripods and heads, StreamPix capture software from NorPix, one-year hardware warranty and four hours e-training.
http://movimento.realviz.com

Movimento v1.2

Price: $39,500 (4 units), $59,000 (8 units)
Company: Realviz
Contact: +33 4923 88460

Quadro FX 4600/5600 SDI

Price: $5,999/$6,999
Company: Nvidia
Contact: +44 (118) 903 3000
www.nvidia.com

The latest professional graphics parts from Nvidia are the Quadro FX 4600 and FX 5600 SDI cards. Hugely expensive and powerful, they are particularly designed for real-time editing, compositing, and colour grading and feature 8-, 10- and 12-bit uncompressed SDI output in SD, HD, or 2K formats. This, combined with their 768 MB to 1.5 GB frame buffers, enables you to take incoming video that is alpha composited, luma keyed or chromakeyed with the Quadro rendering on the outgoing SDI video. The boards also support Shader Model 4.0, via the OpenGL or DirectX 10 APIs.

Menus Master v2.6

Price: Available on request
Company: Omegame
Contact: +33 148 051 098
www.omegame.com

French user interface provider Omegame has released another point version of its Menus Master software. Improvements range from streamlined art techniques on the client to better integration with input devices. One such is the circular button zone, which enables eight-way circular selection when using an analogue stick. On the UI creation side, you can now use 2D or 3D objects to mask other objects, with up to eight simultaneous masks supported. Multithreading, better texture management, new interface icons and enhanced statistics to show you how each UI object is used so you gain a better understanding of user bottlenecks, fill out the release.

< AUDIO >

ALL-IN-ONE MASTER

Bias' Master Perfection Suite offers six plug-ins at a nice price

WHEN IT COMES TO demonstrating the fluid interaction between audio packages, plug-in standards and formats, Bias' Master Perfection Suite provides a notable example. It contains six audio processing plug-ins, which support Audio Units, RTAS, and VST-compatible host applications such as Cubase, Live, Logic, Pro Tools, Sonar, Sound Forge and Wavelab on Windows and Macs. The latest version supports Vista and Mac OS X Leopard.

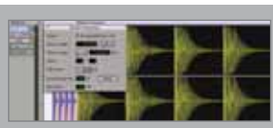
In terms of the features offered by the plug-ins, these handle spectral matching (Repli-Q), pitch correction/manipulation (PitchCraft), audio analysis (Reveal), multi-band dynamic processing (Sqweez-3 & -5), paragraphic EQ (SuperFreq) and gate/expander (GateEx).

Repli-Q enables you to improve improperly equalised tracks and assists when mastering for different delivery targets. It uses a linear phase equalisation algorithm to provide spectral matching: something also incorporated into multi-band processing plug-ins, the three-band Sqweez-3 and five-band Sqweez-5. PitchCraft is a real-time pitch correction/transposition plug-in used to fix out-of-tune vocals or other single voice instruments. Integrated audio analysis tool Reveal consists of seven components: Oscilloscope, Peak and RMS Power History, Spectrogram, Pan Power, Spectral Analysis, Lissajous Phase Scope, and Peak and RMS Level Meters. Finally, SuperFreq provides mastering equalisation with four, six, eight and ten-band parametric graphic equalisers, while GateEx enables you to removes signals below an assignable threshold via parameter controls and waveform displays.
www.bias-inc.com

Master Perfection Suite v1.2

Price: $599, Free update from v1.x
Company: BIAS, Inc
Contact: +01 707 782 1866

Pro Tools HD 7.4



Price: £110 for update
Company: Digidesign
Contact: +44 (0) 1753 655 999
www.digidesign.com

It sounds like the sort of thing you'd expect from Hollywood SFX studios, but the big push in the Pro Tools HD 7.4 software is Elastic Time. It's a real-time tempo manipulation feature that enables you to change tempo or time on the fly. In particular, it provides more freedom in terms of experimenting when making loop-based compositions as you can explore different tempos for loops and files that sync with your current sessions. It can also be used in post-production to stretch or squeeze audio tracks to fit video time frames, using high-quality algorithms that Digidesign claims make time manipulation virtually undetectable.

Cubase 4.1

Price: Free update
Company: Steinberg
Contact: +49 40 210 35 0
www.steinberg.net

Music composition and production functionality are the key features in the updates released for Cubase and Cubase Studio. These are highlighted by a redesigned Sample Editor, which groups related functions together, while eight user-definable realtime controllers, known as Quick Controls, have been added to the Track Inspector. Cubase 4.1 supports side-chaining on VST3 plug-ins which enables you to use any signal in the VST mixer as a sidechain input signal for better control of audio-controlled effects. Cubase 4.1 also supports import and export of the musical score interchange format MusicXML, and more prosaically, Vista32.

Scotland – Concept Artist

The creators of a number 1 smash hit 360 game are currently looking for a concept artist to work with a talented team on a high profile, next-gen MMO. If you want some solid experience with a highly regarded developer, this is the position for you. Experience preferred but not essential.

Midlands – Tools Programmer

This developer is responsible for a hugely popular console FPS series and is looking for a Tools programmer to help with their latest next-gen project. With a minimum of two years experience, the successful candidates will provide plug-ins, scripts and bespoke tools to support the creation of art and animation assets. Experience with a game tool chain would be a bonus.

North East – Lead Programmer

This highly regarded studio created one of the most successful boxing sims of modern times and is on the lookout for an experienced programmer to lead a talented team through the final phase of an exciting title for next generation consoles. The ideal candidate will have at least 5 years industry experience with good communication and teamwork skills.

Midlands – Level Designer

If you have game design experience and are looking to take the next step with your career this could be the company for you. Having worked on one of the best loved sports series ever, you'll be working alongside a talented design team on their latest next-gen project.

Our referral scheme – the higher the salary, the more you get! The finder fee depends on the salary accepted, and our rates are:

Less than £20k - £250
£20-29,999 - £500
£30-39,999 - £750
£40k+ - A WHOOPING £1000!

CALL FOR FURTHER DETAILS

Midlands – Senior Programmer

This AAA studio are looking for a Senior Programmer to work with the team behind one of the most prestigious racing series ever made. They're looking for a candidate to use their experience to design, implement and code modules to a required standard - with the opportunity for project bonuses and flexible hours.

South West – Senior Environment Artist

Want to work with the team behind one of the most successful military games series ever? As part of the Environment Art team, you will be involved in all aspects of creating visually stunning gaming environments for this companies cutting edge next-generation titles. Your greater experience will mean your involvement in helping organise, mentor and lead small teams of less experienced artists.

South East – Assistant Producer

If you want to make your CV really stand out, then this AAA studio is just for you. Having produced one of the most intricate and established RTS series ever, they are looking for someone willing to get truly stuck in to their next project. Whether you have assistant producer experience or are in a Lead QA role, apply now before it's too late!

South East – Senior Producer

If you think you have what it takes to run a large team for a very well known and hugely successful franchise with large publisher backing, then this is the position for you. They're looking for a Senior Producer with excellent group leadership skills and proven production experience. For a chance to work for one of the UK's leading developers, apply now.

prospero recruitment.

Salaries on all our jobs are dependent on experience, as are benefits.
For more information or a confidential discussion of your career options, please call Fran Mulhern on 0207 404 6383 or email games@prosperorecruitment.com

Give yourself a flying start

Established in 1989, Aardvark Swift was the first recruitment agency to dedicate its services to the video games industry, we have since evolved to become a market leading specialist recruiter for the Games and Mobile Entertainment markets. Our dedicated consultants handle vacancies including Porting Programmers, Software Developers, J2ME Programmers, Artists, Designers, Producers, QA Testers and Sales and Marketing Professionals.

Senior Designer
£Excellent + Benefits
Midlands CW014PD

Our client is a games development an publishing legend, with an enviable track-record and solid plans for future growth. They are looking for an experienced Senior Game Designer to be involved in the conceptualisation and direction of project(s) within the studio. The successful will be responsible for the design of a project and monitor that project through development ensuring that it adheres to the vision and direction, meeting the highest standard within required timescales.

Creatives
Email colin@aswift.com

Lead Technical Artist
£Excellent + Benefits
South-East SH654LTA

Our client is a major force in the games industry, and is currently looking for a Lead Technical Artist to join their award-winning studio. The Lead Technical Artist defines the production techniques used by artists, and ensures that the art team has all of the relevant tools and workflows they need to operate at peak efficiency. You should have at least 2 years experience in AAA console game development, Computer Programming/Scripting experience (e.g. C++, MEL, Python), and a strong knowledge of game development software and techniques.

Creatives
Email colin@aswift.com

PS3 Graphics Programmer
£Excellent + Benefits
North West PA1976F1

This is a key hire for a genuinely AAA project. The ideal candidate will have at least 2 years games Industry experience, with at least 1 published title, be proficient in C/C++ and have OpenGL, D3D or PS2 VU1 experience. You will also have hands-on experience authoring and optimising vertex and pixel shaders using HLSL/CG. This is a great chance to work for a fast growing well respected developer.

Programmers
Email pete@aswift.com

Web www.aswift.com Tel 01709 876877
Aardvark Swift Recruitment Silicon House, Farfield Park, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 5DB

AardvarkSwift

SOURCE&PROCESSTOOLS

All part of the process

As projects get bigger, more complex and distributed around the globe, making sure your production and asset management tools are as sharp as possible is becoming critically important, says Jon Jordan…

When it comes to the development of video games there are plenty of contradictory trends.

The one that should be worrying producers (and finance directors) is growing project complexity versus the need for total control over production entities such as assets, source code and builds, as well as post-production tasks such as bug-fixing and QA.

It's the sort of problem you'd like to think could be solved with a monolithic system that tracks everything while providing transparent yet focused visual information for all the different people involved in the process. Sadly not. In fact, referring back to the last time *Develop* covered such tools (*issue 66*), the big gap in the running order we've listed here is Microsoft's much vaunted XNA Build. Part of the XNA initiative in the form of XNA Game Studio Professional, it was quietly ditched.

Instead the landscape breaks down to some well-worn systems.

Perforce's code software configuration tools need little introduction, and despite a prolonged and somewhat rocky introduction into games, the art-focused Alienbrain can also now be described as tried-and-tested. The dark horse, however, is Hansoft. The production management tool is picking up momentum and clients, thanks to its flexibility. One to watch, or evaluate.

PERFORCE

TECHNOLOGY
Perforce 2007.3 (Beta)

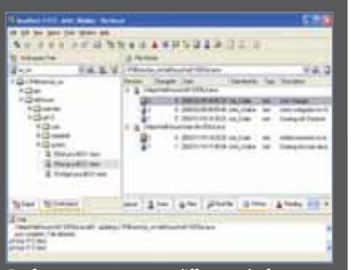
CLIENTS
Activision, BioWare, EA, Epic, Midway, Monolith, Remedy, Sony, THQ, Ubisoft, amongst others

HOST PLATFORMS
Windows, Linux, Mac OS X, Solaris (clients)

INTEGRATION WITH
3ds Max, Maya, Office, Photoshop, XSI

COST
From $800 per user

CONTACT
+44 845 345 0116, info@perforce.com



Perforce supports many different platforms

www.perforce.com

The standard software configuration management tool, Perforce is a client/server-based technology that enables robust version control, source and defect tracking. Visual and command line clients are available for a wide range of platforms while the latest version offers improved concurrency, better server performance and optimised network usage. The Graphical Tool plug-in now supports the latest versions of Maya, 3ds Max and XSI.

SOFTIMAGE

TECHNOLOGY
Alienbrain 8.0

CLIENTS
Bizarre Creations, Blizzard, Codemasters, id, EA, Rockstar, Sega, Sony, THQ, Ubisoft

HOST PLATFORMS
Windows, Linux, Mac OS X (clients)

INTEGRATION WITH
3ds Max, Maya, Photoshop, VisualStudio, XSI

COST
Starter pack from £12,000

CONTACT
+44 (0) 1404 831715

The Alienbrain system has been streamlined

www.alienbrain.com

Designed to streamline the production and organisation of art assets, one key new feature in Alienbrain 8 is the Central License Server. This improves management and performance when dealing with multiple Alienbrain servers, including load-balancing, back-ups and admin tasks. There's also an enhanced remote solution, which is optimised for slow network connections, and the bucketing system has been speeded up.

HANSOFT

TECHNOLOGY
Hansoft v5.0

CLIENTS
Ascaron, Creative Assembly, EA, Eurocom, Red Mile, Starbreeze, Ubisoft

HOST PLATFORMS
Windows (2000/XP)

INTEGRATION WITH
available through SDK

COST
€25 per user per month

CONTACT
Patric Palm, solutions@hansoft.se, +46 18 10 90 90

Hansoft 5 is a collaborative tool

www.hansoft.se

Swedish production management company Hansoft is expanding the reach and flexibility of its eponymous software. A QA module and support for Agile methodologies are the most recent features added to a integrated suite handling collaborative scheduling, communications, task tracking, resource usage and document management. Remote access is controlled using AES 256-bit encryption, while custom integrations can be carried out via the SDK module.

XOREAX

TECHNOLOGY
IncrediBuild v3.1

CLIENTS
over 300 including Big Huge Games, Codemasters, Crytek, id, Relic, Ubisoft

HOST PLATFORMS
Windows

INTEGRATION WITH
Visual Studio 6.0, .NET and 2005 platforms

COST
$349 per client license

CONTACT
sales@xoreax.com

www.xoreax.com

Xoreax is moving into wider processing

Xoreax has subtly changed its positioning. Known for its Windows distributed build technology, it's venturing into wider distributed processing. For example, id used its rebranded Xoreax Grid Engine to pre-process AI for *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*. But whatever you're using the system for, it works the same, with spare CPU cycles available on your office LAN (or dedicated server farm) used to speed up development.

VIEWTIER SYSTEMS

TECHNOLOGY
Parabuild 3.2

CLIENTS
Creative Assembly, Linden Lab, Lionhead Studios, Torpex Games

HOST PLATFORMS
Windows, Linux, Mac OS X, Solaris

INTEGRATION WITH
Perforce, Subversion, CVS, Surround SCM amongst others

COST
from $950 per server

CONTACT
+01 650 223 3320

www.viewtier.com

The Parabuild dashboard view

The company motto is 'Build With Pleasure!', so there's little surprise that Parabuild is a build and release management system designed to help you improve you software development thanks to what Viewtier calls 'Continuous Integration and delivering practically unbreakable scheduled builds'. It enables you to carry out multi-platform remote and parallel builds, uses a Web interface and supports a wide range of version control systems.

Innovation

by David Jefferies
Black Rock Studio

THERE HAVE been some great innovative moments in games. Recently there were the Portals in *Portal*, looking further back there was monkey gliding in *Super Monkey Ball* and even further back still, my personal favourite, 12 levels of parallax in *Shadow of the Beast*. To be successful in this game you need to innovate and to keep succeeding you need a culture of innovation.

But innovation is very hard and, although any team member might have moments of inspiration, if you want the innovations to keep on coming you need to foster a culture of innovation. Large unwieldy teams with poor communication and full schedules are not the kind of environment to come up with creative ideas. People need space to innovate and they need to be relieved of the time pressures that are so common in our industry.

Looking back to our pre-Disney days when we were still Climax Racing, if we're honest, we know we didn't do enough to foster a culture of innovation. Being a work-for-hire studio we didn't feel able to give people space to innovate.

Unsurprisingly Disney is very keen on innovation, they see it as core to their business and so we were encouraged to come up with ideas for improving our innovations.

One such idea was Mini-Game Week. For this five-day period, the entire company – everyone from programming to accounts – stopped work for a week and split into teams of five or six people, made up of a couple of programmers, a couple of artists, a designer and another staff member. The brief was to create a game in a week on any platform and in any genre.

"The small teams meant that everyone could contribute and the teams were flexible enough to quickly change direction if an idea wasn't working out..."

Some of the output from the teams was quite incredible. The small teams meant that everyone could contribute and the teams were flexible enough to quickly change direction if an idea wasn't working out. Importantly, all the ideas came from within the team and so the teams had a vested interest in making them work. Lastly, the teams were free of normal commercial constraints and so no idea was too crazy.

Mini-Game Week was great for getting the staff thinking creatively but the next question was how could we harness the good things that came from the week and get them to contribute directly to our games. One thing we're experimenting with now is Technology Strike Teams. These are small groups of a couple of programmers with an artist and they have been given a blank canvas and told to go away and produce something to help their current game in a few weeks. It doesn't matter what they do as long as it's new.

We don't know how it'll work out, but if we end up with something as good as the parallax scrolling from *Shadow of The Beast* then I'll be more than happy.

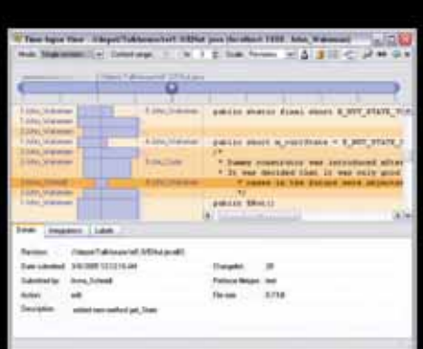
www.blackrockstudio.com

A behind the scenes look at Disney's Mini-Game Week can be found at www.developmag.com

Perforce | *Fast* Software Configuration Management

Introducing Time-lapse View,

a productivity feature of Perforce SCM.



Perforce Time-lapse View

Time-lapse View lets developers see every edit ever made to a file in a dynamic, annotated display. At long last, developers can quickly find answers to questions such as: 'Who wrote this code, and when?' and 'What content got changed, and why?'

Time-lapse View features a graphical timeline that visually recreates the evolution of a file, change by change, in one fluid display. Colour gradations mark the aging of file contents, and the display's timeline can be configured to show changes by revision number, date, or changeset number.

Time-lapse View is just one of the many productivity tools that come with the Perforce SCM System.

PERFORCE
SOFTWARE

Download a free copy of Perforce, no questions asked, from www.perforce.com. Free technical support is available throughout your evaluation.

KEYRELEASE

PRODUCT: Manhattan
COMPANY: Gamr7
PRICE: Available on request
CONTACT: +33 04 77 23 78 32
W: www.gamr7.com

Out-the-box town planning

French middleware company Gamr7 is aiming for automatic city generation...

According to new French middleware vendor Gamr7, the 'city problem' consists of two interlinked problems: to be convincing, game cities require more than some very detailed urban elements – they require many very detailed urban elements. Co-founder Lionel Barret reckons around 100,000 such objects are needed. It should be stated though that with a service business model that roughly prices the company's smarts at €1 per element, he would say that, wouldn't he?

But to get too caught up on such mercantile talk would be disingenuous to wider market trends and the company itself. Despite the impact of outsourcing, the production of game art is becoming both a budgetary and a workflow bottleneck. Anyone who can successfully solve the problem with procedural art generation tools will be able to rake in millions of Euros, not hundreds of thousands.

"Lionel was responsible for the development tools at a French game studio, so he's faced these issues," explains Gamr7's other co-founder Bernard Légaut, who himself comes from a finance background. "That's why a year ago, we decide to work on specific middleware to automatically let people design cities, every kind of city from realistic to futuristic and fantasy."

As is often the case with such early technology, the release date for standalone software that customers will be able buy is somewhat fluid. Summer 2008 is mentioned, although Légaut says Gamr7 is currently working with some early adopters on a services-based model, hence the earlier mention of €1 per object.

"Right now we are designing the roadmap to find out what developers really want so we're meeting people, showing them the product and seeing what features are required," he says.

The technology works through building and road placement

Codenamed Manhattan, the way the technology works is elegantly Gallic. The basis of a city is created by the type and density of its constituent buildings. Their location is worked out using agent-based AI that works out how often the city's 'inhabitants' would need to visit the schools, shops, bus stations, gyms and hospitals etc. These probabilities are then used to place key buildings, with road networks being built up around them and minor buildings slotted into the gaps. Watching the city grow in this way is an strange experience as road networks join up and the urban sprawl is slowly created.

Of course, users will have plenty of hands-on controls, with the ability to delete or relocate buildings, as well as tweak the settings and grow the whole city again. You can also influence the city's macro structure by defining broad industrial or residential zones, while realism is further enhanced as heightmaps and other geographical noise can be used to affect a city's structure.

"We are simulating the growth of the city via the meanings of the buildings. From this, we can work out where they should be and from that we construct road networks that make sense for the people who live in the city," says Légaut.

But, as he adds, this version of the technology is merely the opening gambit. The company's future plans include the procedural creation of buildings themselves as well as a runtime version for integration into game engines.

"Any game developer that's had to make a city environment knows the process is a burden. The way people currently do it is using army of artists who take thousands of photos, but that doesn't fit into every budget," he ends.

Top: Co-founder of Gamr7, Bernard Légaut

Above: Manhattan can handle both modern and futuristic cities

An automatic Barratt production line

Perhaps the most ambitious part of Gamr7's future is the requirement to create tools that will procedurally generate buildings from scratch. Bernard Légaut says this remains some way off. The company has to focus on getting its basic toolset robust and fully integrated, with work being carried out to combine the city and building editors into a streamlined whole.

He expects the eventual procedural process to involve a certain amount of artist-led machine-learning. Hence, in order to teach the system what sort of buildings you need for your particular game, an artist will make a couple of different versions of houses says, tagging the important features such as windows, doors, chimneys etc. The system will then automatically churn out some examples of its own, with the artist then providing feedback about which variants fit within the overall scheme of the game. At that point, the system could then be hooked up to a game engine to create new worlds on-the-fly, although designers might have something to say about the impact on gameplay.

"Audiomotion Studios is the obvious choice because their excellent track record in the industry speaks volumes. The service is always prompt, professional and the quality of the motion capture really is second to none." Julian Widdows, Development Director, Swordfish Studios

"Quite simply if you need people you can trust and who know what they are talking about then go to Audiomotion." Jan-Bart van Beek Guerrilla Games

"Audiomotion have proven to be a first class partner throughout the development of B-Boy at FreeStyleGames. They're not only passionate and experienced at what they do, they provide a level of service beyond the call of duty." Chris Lee, Commercial Director, FreestyleGames

Audiomotion have always provided us with the highest quality of service; they never fail to impress us with their professionalism and depth of knowledge. Jason Tassell, Senior Animator, Volatile Games

www.audiomotion.com | +44 (0) 870 1600 504

HDFILMS SIGNS UE3 FOR ANIMATED SERIES

HDFilms has selected Unreal Engine 3 to develop *Chadam*, its new short-form 3D animated Web series to be distributed by Studio 2.0, the digital production and distribution arm of the Warner Bros. Television Group.

The character Chadam is the brainchild of acclaimed artist Alex Pardee and character icon for the popular rock band The Used.

Chadam uses his power of imagination to physically change his environment – and, therefore, his world – to save it from evil.

The series will find Chadam in a place of refuge, where he and others have retreated to plan their attack against Viceroy, a serial killer who threatens their way of life.

Using Unreal Engine 3 to render original character models and landscapes designed by Pardee, this action-horror-adventure story filled with self-discovery serves as an incubator for future expansion of the *Chadam* universe across all entertainment mediums.

"As film, television and video games continue to evolve, the convergence of their associated tools, techniques and audiences are providing a fantastic opportunity for creative, cost-effective and compelling storytelling such as *Chadam*," said HDFilms president and producer Jason Hall, who is also the founder and former CEO of Monolith.

"Utilising the Unreal Engine 3 as part of our overall production process has enabled us to realize our full vision for the 3D series."

"Jason Hall's access to leading-edge technology like the 3D animation engine of Epic is one of the reasons we are excited to be in business with his company HD Films," said Craig Hunegs, executive vice president, business management, Warner Bros. Television Group. "We look forward to working with Epic in what we hope is a long-term relationship. The *Chadam* project is a great example of Studio 2.0's commitment to provide the most compelling and exciting user experience in online and wireless video."

"Being able to work with such an advanced technology to finally bring my abstract artwork into the 3D realm is like a chance for me to play Dr. Frankenstein, except our monster is Chadam, whose skin is my art, and whose heart is the Unreal Engine 3," added *Chadam* creator Pardee.

Jason Hall (pictured) and HDFilms will use Unreal Engine 3 to unleash the hyper-stylized, exaggerated world of Chadam in a new animated series.

SOUTHPEAK OPENS DOORS FOR INDEPENDENTS THROUGH UE3

SouthPeak Games has purchased an Unreal Engine 3 studio licence for the development of its upcoming PC and console titles worldwide. The agreement is in effect throughout the life of UE3 technology across all major platforms including downloadable content.

SouthPeak's latest release planned under the new studio licence is *Monster Madness EX: Battle for Suburbia*, currently under development by Psyonix Studios for PlayStation 3.

"Independent developers need more opportunities to bring their games to market with next-generation technology," said Katie Morgan, executive vice president at SouthPeak Games.

"UE3 provides developers all the tools and resources necessary to build great games and SouthPeak is giving talented developers a chance to focus on creating their games without spending the resources to create an engine to support it."

"Our focus on UE3 technology has been key to our success as an independent studio. This is an ideal opportunity for us to work with SouthPeak on our projects," said Dave Hagewood, president of Psyonix Studios.

DESTINEER LICENSES UE3

Destineer Publishing recently announced that it has licensed Unreal Engine 3 for a yet to be announced project.

Destineer is the studio formed by former Bungie executive vice president Peter Tamte.

"We are using the Unreal Engine to make a game for a genre in which you would not expect to see it. The engine is performing marvelously and Epic's support has been top-notch," said Tamte. Epic encourages companies to be imaginative and think outside the box with Unreal Engine 3.

"The Unreal Engine 3 is an impressively versatile piece of technology, and we are very excited to utilise it for our unannounced project."

UPCOMING EPIC ATTENDED EVENTS:

LYON GDC GAME CONNECTION
Le Palais des Congrès de Lyon
December 4th to 6th, 2007

GDC 2008
San Francisco, CA
February 18th to 22nd, 2008

Please email: mrein@epicgames.com for appointments.

To discuss anything raised in this column or general licensing opportunities for Epic Games' Unreal engine, contact: **mrein@epicgames.com**

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Canadian-born Mark Rein is Vice President and Co-Founder of Epic Games based in Cary, North Carolina. Epic's Unreal Engine 3 has won Game Developer Magazine's Frontline Award for Best Game Engine for the past three years and Epic was recently awarded Best Studio at the Spike TV Video Game Awards. Epic's Gears of War, won Gamespot's overall Game of the Year and sold over 4,000,000 units on Xbox 360. Epic is currently working on the Unreal Tournament 3 for publisher Midway and a PC version of Gears of War for publisher Microsoft Game Studios.

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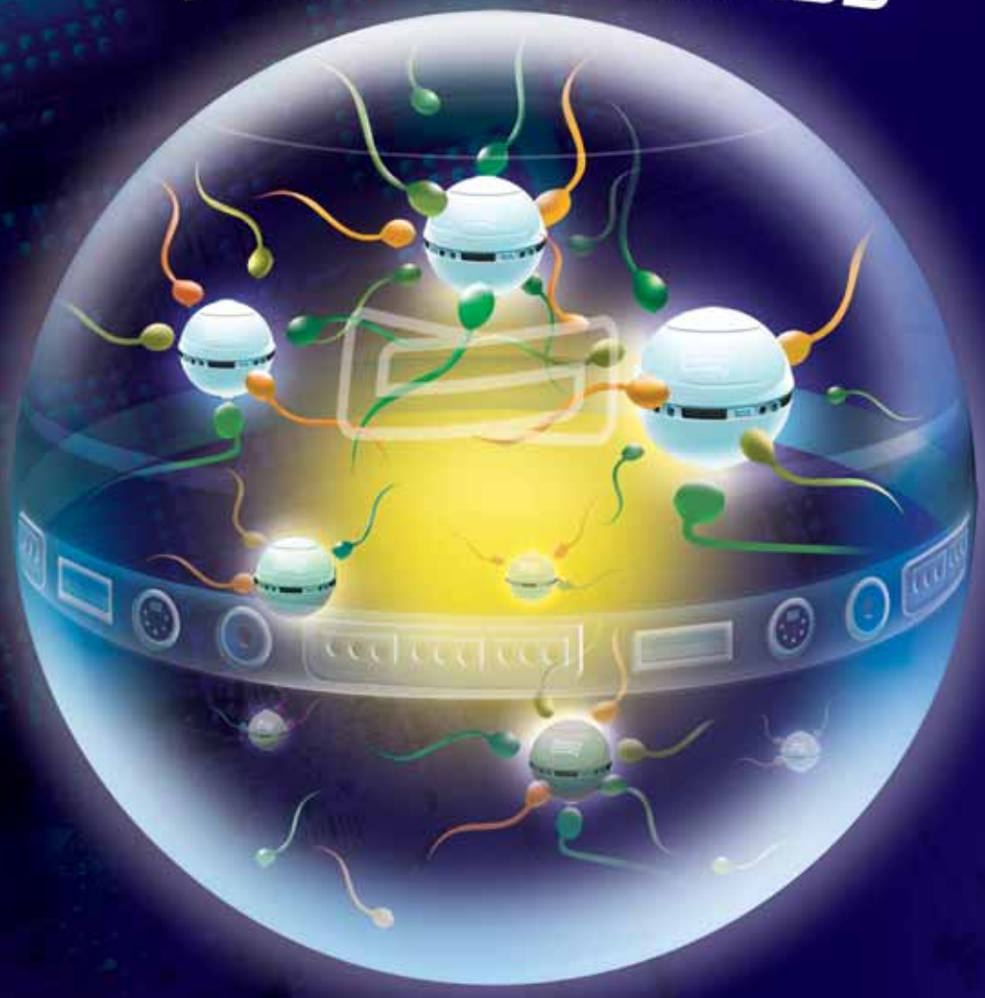

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HEARDABOUT

2008 – BRING IT ON

John Broomhall toasts the past year of game audio and looks forward to 2008…

Wow! There goes another 12 months worth of music, sound and dialogue production, with talented artists and programmers applying their craft to a multitude of game developments around the world.

Their dedication, passion and commitment is self-evident in the resulting soundtracks for games like *Mass Effect, BioShock, Crackdown, Heavenly Sword* – the list is endless and the quality consistently higher than ever – both technically and, more importantly, creatively. And beyond our industry borders, there is growing recognition of the advancements in game audio within the film and television sound fraternities who eye up our jobs ever more keenly. Every week, a little more game audio history is made and however slowly at times, things move forward.

It's been an interesting year. *Wii Sports* swept the BAFTA awards winning six gold masks. At July's second Develop Conference, there was an audio session in the game producers' track for the first time. And in October, Video Games Live played to a sell-out audience in the newly refurbished Royal Festival Hall at a concert featuring our very own James Hannigan and Richard Jacques. Unsurprisingly, the crowd went nuts for *Halo 3* with Marty O'Donnell there to enjoy the moment and even lead the audience in song. Fanboys thought it rocked whilst industry dignitaries were thrilled to witness an unbendingly positive reflection of our world and a riotous celebration of creativity.

Sadly, this was also the year Richard Joseph died, his passing provoking an outpouring of tributes around the globe. Those who attended his funeral will recall the family's appreciation, bordering on bewilderment, at just how well-respected and fondly remembered he was by his peers.

For me the calendar has been, as usual, punctuated by *Develop* interviews as every month I have the privilege of speaking to people like you, who continue to take time out to share what you're doing in game audio, how you're doing it and sometimes, even how you wish you'd done it. Some of my personal highlights are featured to the right.

So what of 2008? The shortage of audio programmers is likely to prevail, whilst audio middleware will hopefully go from strength-to-strength improving the cross-platform tools we need to harness that next-gen power. (Let's pray these middleware companies don't have an exit strategy which involves selling to a large publisher just when we come to rely on them).

It seems we're likely to see an increasing use of specialists within audio via trusted outsourcing companies who act as production portals, and inevitably, film and TV post-pro folks are sure to be knocking at our door some more. Also hopefully, producers and project managers will get audio involved earlier on projects, consulting about realistic audio budgets.

"In 2008 audio middleware will hopefully go from strength to strength…

If steps towards the above take place, game audio will continue to become about the 'power of ideas' with further advances in the craft and artistry of game sound design. I'm encouraged that the top people in companies I've worked for this year from developer to publisher to format holder, really 'get it' and will lead the way forward.

So, Season's Greetings and thanks to everyone who's contributed to this column over the last 12 months. If you have something to say about game audio, then please get in touch. We're listening, so bring it on…

John Broomhall is an independent audio director, consultant and content provider
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www.johnbroomhall.co.uk

SOUND BYTES

Choice quotes from the audio experts we've spoken to in the past year…

Jesper Kyd (*The Chronicles Of Spellborn*): "It's interesting to contrast films and games. Movie creators really want composers to find their own voice, realising the music score can set their movie apart. Whereas in games, composers are often asked to imitate Hans Zimmer or John Williams or whoever…"

Marty O'Donnell (*Halo 3*): "[Music] scoring happens late on – I need everything else there to understand where music's needed. Sometimes, changes or additions only become apparent during implementation when I work hands-on with the level designers to define the emotional journey that needs to underscore."

Dan Gardner (*Overlord*): [when discussing how the team used Skype to allow scriptwriter, voice director, developer and voice talent to virtually 'attend' each recording session via broadband] "It really helped creativity doing our own thing in our own environments. Apart from the odd hiccup, VOIP worked amazingly well."

Tom Colvin and Garry Taylor (*Heavenly Sword*): "We make the engine observe music forms to allow long emotionally-charged vocal phrases to play out properly, rather than being faded out just because the game state's changed. This allows the music flow to be maintained – it keeps the connection to the action, without compromising musical sense."

"We have the virtual equivalent of a 'flying faders' film mixing console with extensive hierarchical grouping and scene snapshots. 'Live' editing of audio at this stage is absolutely essential – not just volumes, but proximities, frequency fall-off – even the listener position…"

Adele Kellett (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*): "A great script is the foundation of great final speech assets and therefore we agreed to have a specialist writer working within the audio team – a first for the series. I wanted the whole team to be really aware of the dialogue being recorded for the game and the potential for wastage and additional pick-ups through script changes."

Tim Bartlett (*Sega Rally*): "There's little concept of engine loops in Sega Rally though we haven't gone wholesale for synthesis. Our focus is real-time manipulation of set-piece recordings."

"We still use sampled assets from rolling road recordings but coding is now leading the way in controlling these sounds in real-time according to RPM and load with some serious time-stretching and synthesis akin to something like Melodyne – we are manipulating set-piece recordings of car behaviours to match the players' driving. It's no technical 'walk in the park' and requires a serious programming investment but I can safely say I'd never go back to a loop-based approach."

Mathias Grunwaldt (*The Club*): "[Conducting foley sessions at Universal Sound] was a fantastic learning experience automatically prompting close attention to what the sound of a given component falling or breaking really sounds like. The result was a highly re-usable, superbly recorded bespoke sound library, all at 24 bit 48 kHz with beautifully quiet tails."

"Havok Complete™ allowed us to enhance game-play in Heavenly Sword™ by enabling us to create characters that respond to a complex physical world, with a rich set of physical interactions."
Mike Ball, Chief Technology Ninja, Ninja Theory

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Killer characters

Develop offers an overview of the character animation tool market…

Although we're a year into the current hardware cycle, it's safe to say that it's only with a recent crop of releases that the generation is finally living up to claims that new hardware can enable more believable characters.

From the naturalistic movement of *Assassin's Creed* hero Altair through to the lumbering movement of *BioShock*'s Big Daddies, gamers have never been so spoilt on new personas to take on or enemies to battle – all of them moving realistically.

Developers have never been so spoilt with tools and technology to enable such beings to be created, either – and it's through a unique intersection of quality texture, design, artistry, physics, AI, motion capture and processing power that makes the above heroes and villains come to life.

We've covered each of the above individual fields in Develop before, but of course the key comes in bringing all those components together at the animation stage in order to bring characters to life. Here, we profile four of the key technologies powering character animation today…

HAVOK BEHAVIOR

Having become a key part of the landscape for next-gen development middleware, you'll find Havok's logo on the box of a number of the year's key games releases, from *Assassin's Creed* to *Halo 3*.

When it comes to the character animation, a number of the the firm's tools are key candidates to support it, specifically Havok Animation and Havok Behavior.

While the former lets artists and animators construct animations of both characters and objects, its the latter's use of event-driven behaviours which then sequences them together, helping you construct sequences and movements between states via the UI.

Recent upgrade Havok 5 includes what Havok says is the first unified authoring environment and SDK to combine the power of physics with procedural animation and traditional animation assets – a key development given the close watch many are playing to procedural content, especially at a time when someone like NaturalMotion (*profiled right*) offers a run-time procedural engine for character animation as an alternative. Havok claims that the kit fits into a space between pure asset creation in something like Max or Maya and coding, creating a cross-over between artistry and programming.

Possibly the biggest draw, however, isn't those updates but the fact that both Animation and Behavior are tightly integrated out of the box with Havok's bread-and-butter Physics middleware.

www.havok.com

NATURALMOTION

NaturalMotion's character animation comes in two flavours: an animation engine Morpheme, and dynamic motion synthesis technologies Endorphin (the 3D tool for procedurally generating characters) and Euphoria (which takes the DMS technology to runtime, doing away with canned animations).

This three-pronged approach goes against the grain in some respects, with the DMS technology specifically being what NaturalMotion is most famous for. Given that the technology aspires to do away with the lengthy process of key-frame animation and/or mocap, the sales pitch and allure is obvious.

Endorphin's most recent update beefed the program up to include a range of new features, such as fluid interactions, a control panel plug for Autodesk Maya, improved hold behaviours and more file format options and enhanced resources – but it's the fact that runtime technology Euphoria has found key partners at LucasArts and Rockstar which proves the company is on the right track.

Morpheme, meanwhile, comprises of a runtime animation engine, optimised for PS3, Xbox 360, PS3 and Wii, featuring support for blend nodes and a hierarchical animation state machine. Also included is morpheme:connect, a graphical animation authoring environment to author and test designed transition logic and blends with instant feedback in a full 3D environment.

www.naturalmotion.com

AUTODESK MOTIONBUILDER

While Autodesk continues to claim the lion's share of the asset-creation corner of games development with its Max and Maya art packages, it's its MotionBuilder technology that is key to character animation, pitched as key for taking assets and transforming them into moving characters using key frame animation, mocap data and the like.

The biggest upgrade of late has been MotionBuilder 7.5's update with Extension 2. A key new feature is a new Biped Template lets users quickly rig a biped character, with forward and inverse kinematic full body manipulation rigs automatically created based on the size and proportions of a character, with automatic resizing options based around the proportion of intended characters.

There's also an acknowledgment of artists having to make hundreds of on-screen characters with speed-focused updates that let animators create custom rigs which can be saved and then connected to another character, regardless of size or proportions, which can help give a head-start to replicating basic movement points in new models. The Extension also adds a finger solver for mocap data and other efficiency improvements.

Like Havok, Autodesk's strength isn't just its one piece of software, but rather where it sits in a portfolio of art products. It also offers bespoke inverse kinematics middleware for character movement, Human IK, alongside its 3D art tools.

www.autodesk.com

SOFTIMAGE XSI/FACE ROBOT

For Softimage, the big selling point is how XSI provides an alternative to Autodesk's style of mutliple-programs with an all-in-one solution for the art and animation process.

Rendering and animation tool XSI recently hit version 6.5, with it bringing a number of new enhancements. Another key element to the update has been specific tailoring of the software to fit with the needs of game studios – and key partners such as Lionhead, Valve and NCsoft have reportedly helped offer feedback and champion the software.

But ask any artist or animator using XSI what the main benefit of the software is however, and the answer will usually be about the software's variety and flexibility, specifically when it comes to featuring elements like non-destructive character modeling and MOTOR – XSI's motion rigging element – alongside model manipulating tools and the fact it isn't afraid of letting users swap assets in and out of Max and Maya pipelines.

Further competitive edge, however, is offered with Face Robot, because of course all characters need properly moving mouths and opening eyes. The latest version has been specifically updated specifically for game production pipelines and to slot in between whatever your art app or game engine of choice may be. Finally, game engine export tools let users get their facial animations straight into games using current methods such as skinning and normal mapping.

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Studio News

Games development's movers and shakers. This month: Benton leaves Kuju…

Joel Benton has left his position as Kuju's biz dev man to become an agent at DDM.

Describing his time at Kuju as "the happiest and most successful three-and-a-half years of my career," Benton explained that his role will now be a similar one – except now representing the talented development teams across Europe instead of simply Kuju.

"I am going to be working at DDM with Jeff Hilbert and Joe Minton - who everyone in the industry will know," said Benton. "I will no doubt continue to help my friends at Kuju who show no signs of slowing their meteoric growth despite my departure."

www.ddmagents.com

GUSTO BANBURY

Five new recruits have this month joined Gusto Games' Banbury headquarters – and it's promising more to come.

Daniel Jennion (*pictured, far left*) has joined the company as a QA tester, whilst Clint Masterson (*second from left*) enters the Gusto family as a programmer having previously worked at Cognito. Lucy Axworthy (*centre*) has left Sega's Racing Studio to be senior artist at Gusto, and Derek Hartin (*second from right*) will be taking up roles as QA supervisor and designer. Finally, Jimmy Lin (*far right*) has also been absorbed as a junior programmer.

"With *UTour Golf*, our first online offering, having gone into public beta test it has been a very productive year for Gusto," said Steve Archer, Gusto's development director.

"The recruitment of these talented individuals, who have worked on the likes of *Sega Rally, Dragon Empires, LMA Manager, SingStar, Colin McCrae* and *TOCA*, will add to Gusto's skill base and put us in a great position going forwards as we expand into new genres for 2008."

www.gustogames.com

JAGEX

Cambridge-based Jagex has a new CEO, with former PayPal CEO Geoff Iddison (*pictured*) taking to the chair. He takes over from former CEO Constant Tedder, who will remain on the board of directors. Iddison led PayPal from August 2003 and oversaw its global expansion.

Jagex develops and manages *RuneScape*, the youth-oriented browser-based MMO which the studio says has over six million regular players globally, and has over 400 employees.

"I am very excited about joining Jagex. The company has built an amazing international playing community through the *RuneScape* game. The technology used to distribute the game and the incredible depth offered to anyone playing *RuneScape* makes Jagex a very different gaming company," said Iddison.

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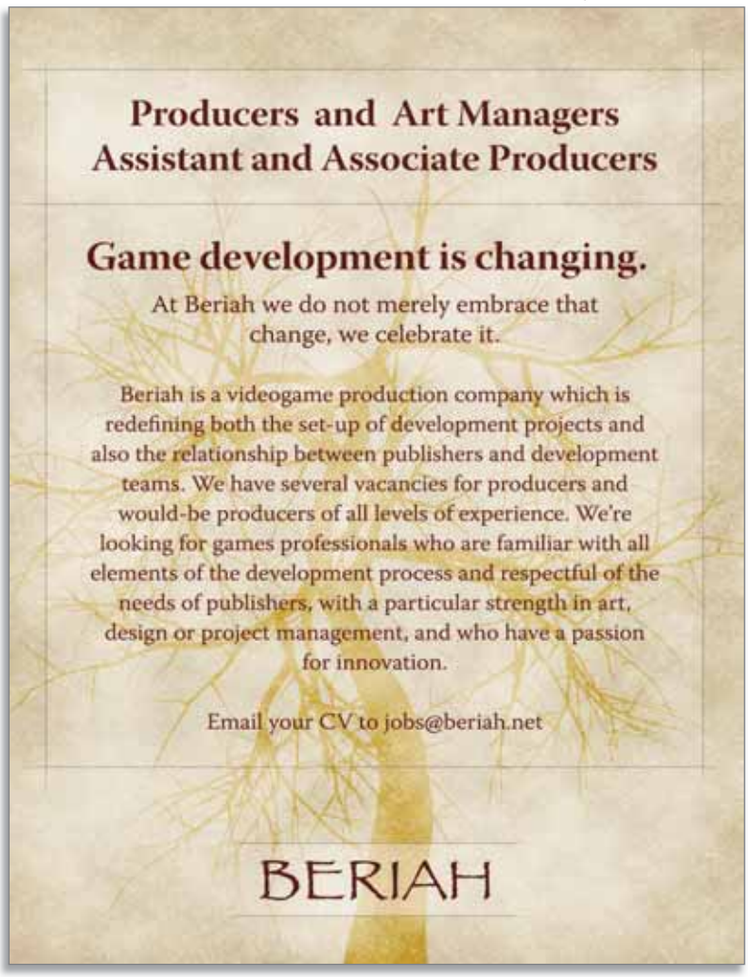
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Tools News

SpeedTree to bloom in UT3

Unreal Tournament 3 will be the latest game to feature IDV's SpeedTree foliage middleware – and the first to give exclusive access to the technology to the modding community.

IDV was one of the first members of Epic's Integrated Partners Programme, in which Epic and technology partners work to provide seamless integration and support for external technologies in Unreal Engine 3.

"For the first time in any game featuring SpeedTree, *Unreal Tournament 3* is going to let players use the professional tree-editing features of the SpeedTree system to create and edit foliage in the worlds they develop," said Epic vice president Mark Rein. "Content creators will enjoy an unprecedented degree of freedom and as they build fantastic new worlds."

IDV CEO Chris King added: "SpeedTree is the undisputed leader in virtual foliage, and its superb presentation in *Unreal Tournament 3* will set a new standard in the way games should look and feel. *Unreal Tournament 3* is going to be an incredible experience, and we are unbelievably proud to get to be part of it."

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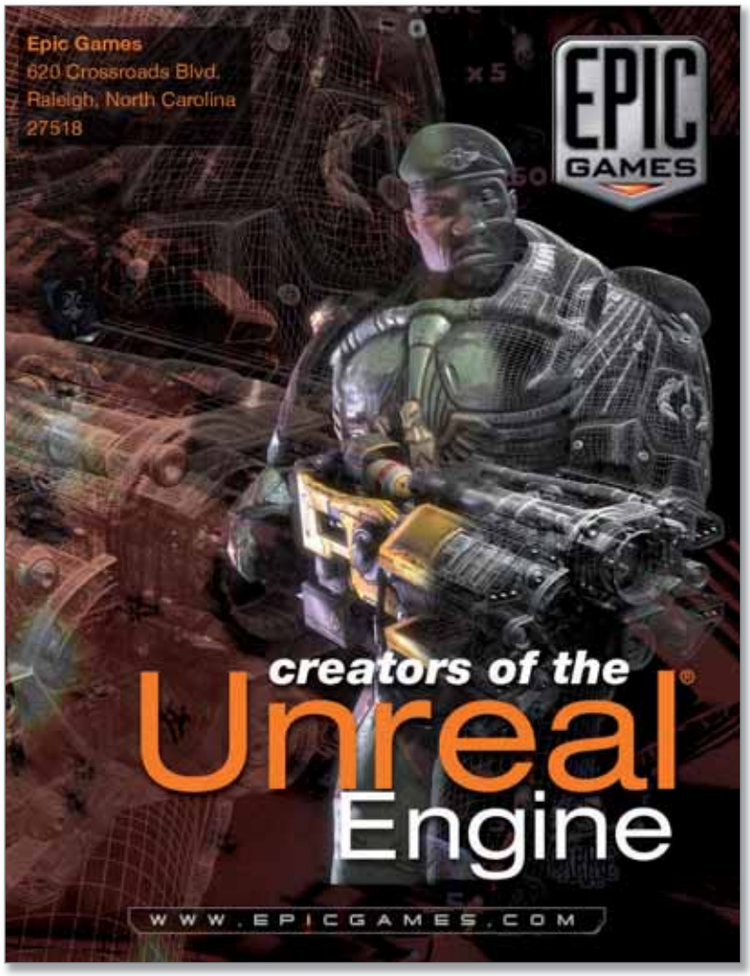

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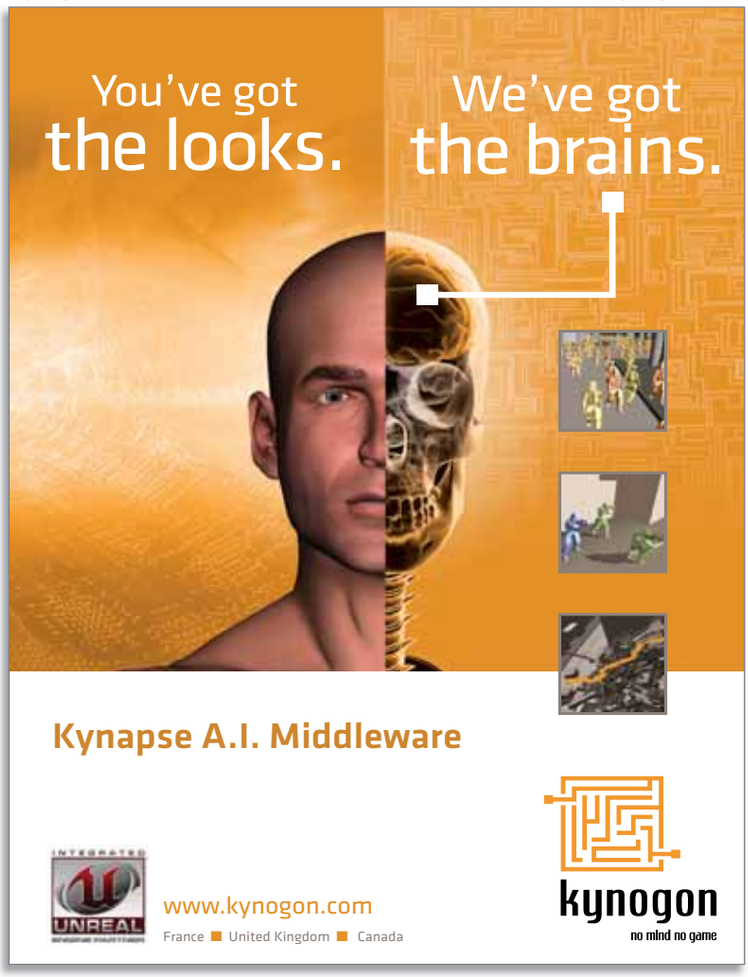

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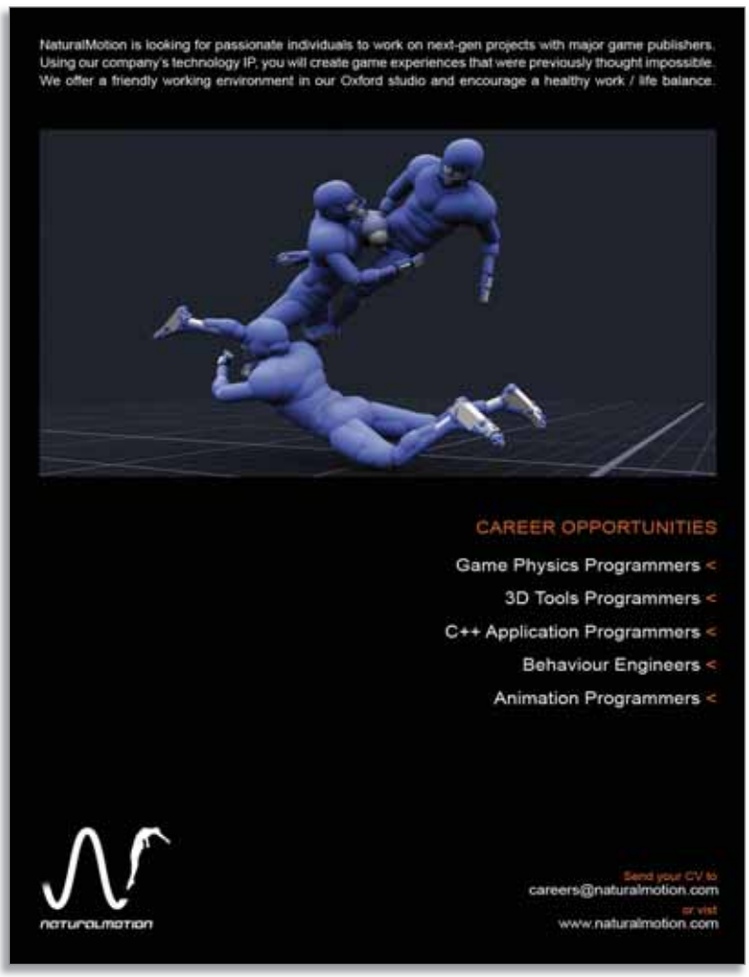
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Tool Spotlight

FMOD

RECENT TITLES:
Guitar Hero III, BioShock, Metroid Prime 3, Heavenly Sword, Call of Duty 4

UPCOMING TITLES:
Starcraft II

FMOD has gained significant traction in the industry of late, the list of recent titles using the cross-platform engine reading like a who's who of triple-A games. Firelight proudly claims that the system is 'actively developed', boasting a quick turnaround of new features specified by clients.

FMOD's API provides a DSP audio engine with high-end features such as 2D and 3D morphing, 3D reverb support and a choice of a low-level API or a data driven equivalent, with performance tuned for each platform. The FMOD designer puts the power of the system in the hands of the sound designer, giving them the ability to completely design the in-game audio and simply provide programmers with assets and an event list.

FMOD is available for all contemporary and last-gen consoles, with a range of licenses available scaling from free for non-commercial games to reduced rates for Xbox Live Arcade, PSN or WiiWare titles.

CONTACT:
FIRELIGHT TECHNOGIES
Level 12, 2-26 Elizabeth St
Melbourne 3000,
Victoria, Australia.

Web: www.fmod.org
Email: sales@fmod.org

Services News

Spinning on all axes

Axis Animation has once again joined forces with Frontier, this time working on *Thrillville: Off the Rails*, the sequel to their original collaboration. Axis worked on over six minutes of cutscenes for the new title, which follow Uncle Mortimer as he guides and supports you through the new theme park environments.

"We knew that Frontier loved what we had done with the cutscenes in *Thrillville* and this time we got to up the ante by bringing in some new characters," said Axis producer Debbie Ross.

Frontier managing director David Walsh added: "We've worked with Axis on several projects now and they have added real value to our collaborations, both during the creative process and in the final quality of their output. We look forward to working with them again in future."

www.axisanimation.com

PEPPERMINT P GRABS FIREBRAND

New developer-focused PR service Peppermint P has signed up its first new client, now representing DS racing specialist Firebrand and its Octane in-house proprietary technology.

Currently specialising on DS, Octane comes packed with high-end features such as game sharing, multi-cart play and Wi-Fi support.

"There isn't a DS game engine that runs as smoothly as Octane, and we're proud that we pack in so much detail and still maintain a 60hz frame rate. This is why I'm confident that our technology positions us as the best handheld racing game developer in the world," said Firebrand CEO Mark Greenshields.

www.firebrandgames.com

TESTRONIC GETS NEW GAMES BOSS

Testronic Labs has appointed Thorsten Heinze as the head of its games division.

Having previously worked at the likes of Nintendo, Crytek and Vivendi, Heinze will be tasked with driving forward business growth for the testing firm.

The firm, owned by German investment group Catalis (which also owns Kuju) recently grew its QA and localisation services via a merger with PMTC in Belgium, and the opening of a new DVD testing facility in Warsaw. It employs over 260 freelance and permanent staff in America, the UK and Europe.

www.testroniclabs.com

REALTIME UK BUZZY BEES

RealtimeUK has just completed work on two of SCEE's *Buzz* titles: *Buzz! Hollywood*, the fifth in the 'senior' range, and *Buzz! Junior: Monster Rumble*, which is the third *Buzz* title to be aimed at a younger audience. Realtime's work involved creating introduction animations for the two titles, with the Hollywood title showing characters from the series in iconic movie situations, lampooning classic films such as *Indiana Jones* and countless cowboy western classics.

www.realtimeuk.com

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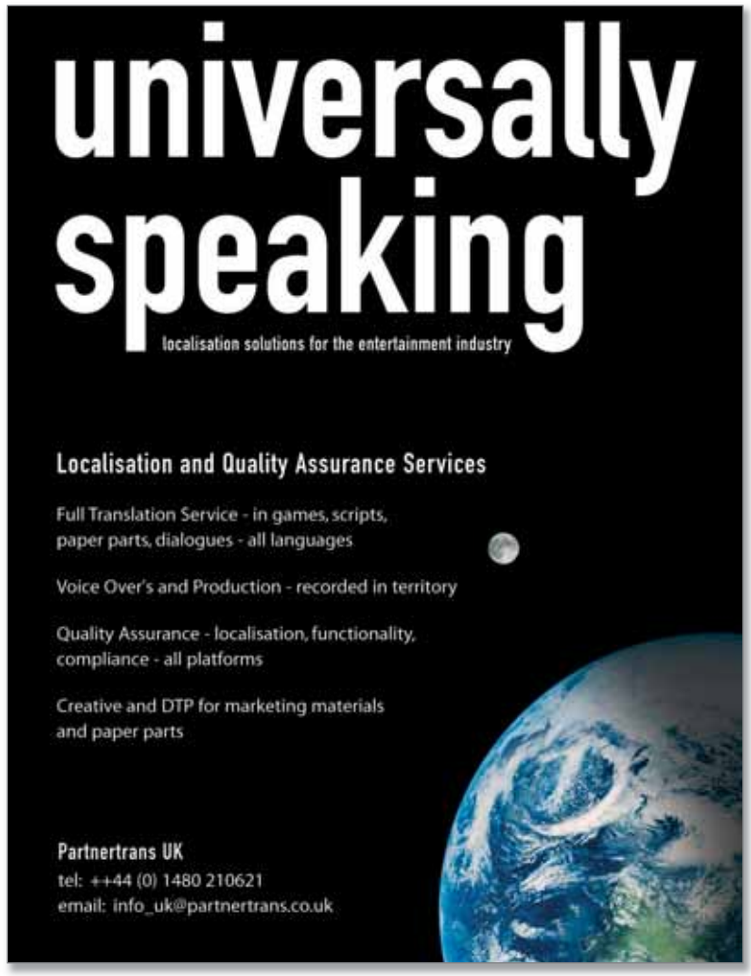
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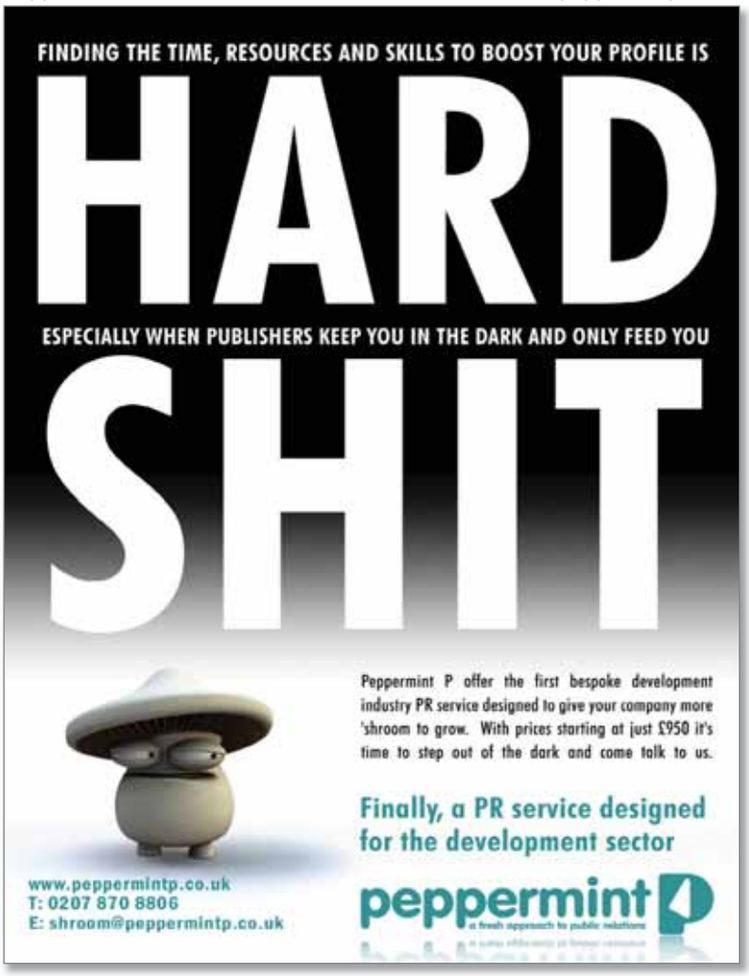
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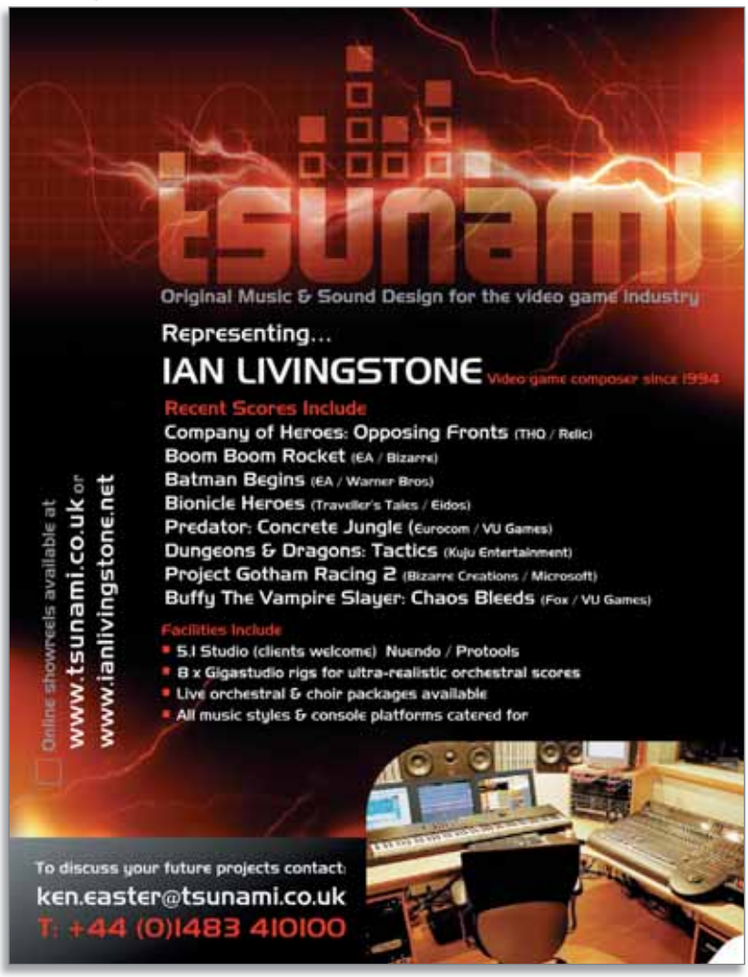
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Services Spotlight

PEPPERMINT P

FACTFILE
Area of expertise: PR agency for game developers
Location: Surrey
Founded: November 2007
W: www.peppermintp.co.uk
E: enquiries@peppermintp.co.uk
Key Personnel: Simon Jones, director (*pictured below left*); Keef Sloan, director (*pictured below right*)
Current clients/projects: Firebrand Games, Rovio Mobile, Rockpool Games

While there may be several PR agencies that cater to the needs of developers, it was a marketplace that nevertheless seemed tempting enough to marketing consultancy service Peppermint M. Just last month it formed a new splinter operation, Peppermint P, sold as a PR agency that worked entirely to promote development clients.

But why enter decide to enter a new field at all? It came about through Rockpool Games picking Peppermint M and assigning it a task: to find it a buyer within twelve months. They did just that, explains director Simon Jones: "We did a great job, they got nominated for awards, their profile went through the roof and they were bought by Eidos in April this year."

It was while doing this that the company realised the need for a bespoke PR service tailored to developers. But why should developers go with Peppermint P, when there's already several other agencies representing studios? "Our services can be tailored to small developers," says Jones. "Our prices start at £950 ensuring we're within the reach of even the smallest teams. The video game sector is serviced by many very good consumer PR agencies, but the fees that we are proposing wouldn't even cover their champagne bills." That and, he adds, their combined 30 years experience in the sector.

Aside from making sure everyone knows of their clients, the Peppermint P service focuses on building a six to twelve month plan together with the client, that can cover things such as finding help recruiting, finding investment, making sure they catch the eyes of publishers or whatever other service they may need.

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United Kingdom

Training News

Games Academy teams up with NaturalMotion

Oxford-based NaturalMotion has signed an agreement with the Games Academy in Germany to integrate its endorphin technology into the course, as well as provide early access to upcoming 3D technology.

"Thanks to NaturalMotion's support, we have the ability to integrate this exciting technology into student curriculum immediately," said Thomas Dlugaiczyk, principal and managing partner of Games Academy.

"Upon graduation, students will have a leg up on the competition because we strive to provide the latest professional-grade tools found in the digital entertainment industry. The use of endorphin will be integral to helping our graduates create the next era of digital entertainment."

Andy Payne, NaturalMotion's VP of sales for Europe and Asia, added: "We are thrilled that Games Academy has chosen to integrate endorphin into student coursework. The partnership highlights our commitment to support the educational market by giving access to our unique technology and growing the user base."

www.gamesacademy.de

HOCHSCHULE DARMSTADT FORMS COLLABRATION WITH CRYTEK

German media school Hochschule Darmstadt has signed a deal with Crysis developer Crytek – with students not only benefiting from being able to use the studio's next-gen *CryEngine 2* technology, but also lectures from the developers on topics such as game concepts, game design, computer animation and engine technology.

The software will be used in digital media courses, which not only includes gaming-related topics but also related fields such as video production, sound technology and interactive media.

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Letters

Send your letters and comments on any of the content within this issue of Develop to the editor at: *michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk*

VARIABLE DECLARATIONS

OPINION : ALPHA

by Owain Bennallack

Cry Havok and unleash the dogs of doubt

"While Intel isn't in the business of making games, it's hardly a neutral party..."

In a recent opinion piece (left) executive editor Owain Bennallack aired some concerns that Havok might be lost to Intel following its recent acquisition – but MD of the physics specialist, whose tech has appeared in the likes of Crackdown (pictured), says that's not the case

Havok chief: 'Our acquisition is good for middleware'

I was interested to read your opinion article in the October edition of Develop magazine ('*Cry Havok and unleash the dogs of doubt*', *Develop 77, October*) surrounding the issue of the Intel acquisition of Havok.

However there are a couple of points that you may not have been aware of.

Havok was previously owned by a venture capital company. The strategic objective of any VC is relatively short term: i.e. to ensure a significant return on investment for investors. This type of financing does not always have the future best interest of any business at its heart and can in certain circumstances lead to exits which are not ideal for customers. Havok was determined that this would not happen to our customers.

Havok's long term strategy has always been to grow and develop our business both geographically and by product. We can only do this by remaining cross platform and publisher independent. In order for us to have partnered with anyone, these key objectives have always been the priority. That is one of the reasons why our acquisition by Intel is good for both Havok and the middleware industry.

Graphics is one of the key ingredients of Intel platforms and Intel is a major supplier of graphics/chipsets in desktop and mobile PCs. I don't believe that many people are aware of the extent of Intel's graphics technology. Havok has the expertise in pushing multicore hardware to the limit within the games industry. Intel is pushing the boundaries of visual computing across many markets both geographically and across other sectors. Put the two together and the market for physics products should expand significantly.

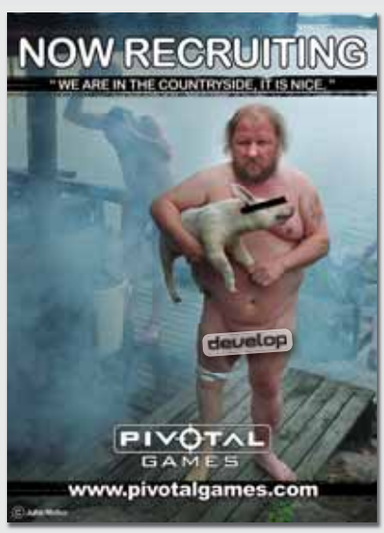
Havok has maintained a year-over-year revenue growth rate for the last three years, is cash flow positive and continues to be in a strong financial position. We now want to expand our business into emerging markets such as Asia. Intellectual property rights have always been an issue in countries such as China. With the backing of a company such as Intel, we are in a better position to protect our IP. We have recently opened a new office in Tokyo and intend expanding to serve the Asian markets. We are also currently investing in several R&D projects, the results of which we hope to unveil at GDC in February 2008.

Havok and Intel see significant mutual benefit in joining forces to help expand and develop the middleware market for the interactive games sector. And with the backing of a company such as Intel, Havok is better positioned to grow and serve the critical needs of game developers in the future.

I hope that this gives you a little bit of further insight into the Havok decision to partner with Intel.

David O'Meara
Managing Director
Havok

'My eyes...'



YOU FAILED TO ASK Jim Bambra the most 'Pivotal' question of all in your interview with him – what the hell is going on with his studio's recruitment ad? 'My eyes! The googles, they do nothing,' etc.

Name and address supplied

THE BYRONIC MAN

It's a yearly update for **Simon Byron**…

Byronic Man December 2006 was probably the column's highpoint. As the sequel to the top-rated December 2005 edition, it boasted improved aesthetics, cleverly introduced extra letters between key phrases to make the transition along each sentence much smoother, and boasted a unique feature where you could read along to your own favourite music simply by positioning your ears close to a speaker playing songs you like, as long as they were by Muse.

It was also the most realistic. The fine work done by Intent Media's licensing department meant I was able to use – for the first time ever – all letters of the alphabet, rather than substituting certain combinations for the word 'oranges' as a stopgap.

Indeed, you'll famously remember members of my development team proclaim last year's column as being the best yet; the closest you'll get to a real column, like what the professional columnists write. We were all very pleased with it. Which presented some problem for this year. Obviously the fact that people keep reading it means we're obliged to keep providing it, but we need to show technological progression in order to justify its reappearance, just 12 short months later. In truth, there's not been much in the way of genuine innovation since the column blossomed from a collection of pseudo three-dimensional letter sprites superimposed upon an isometric A4 word area into a fully interactive page in a magazine which looked almost identical to a real page in a real magazine thanks to complex rendering techniques and a new graphics engine.

"We're finding ways to incorporate ideas from other opinion pieces as soon as we've come up with a clever trademarkable name for them…"

So for 'BM 08' (as we're naming it, in order for it to age more slowly), we're bringing out what we think is the best in the series to date.

For example, we all know how to read, but we're changing how that works to prove our claim we're improving things. Other columns require their readers to make short hops with their eyes between paragraphs when they want to move towards the end of article. This is fine if you're a reading purist, but thanks to real time physics, we're now able to remove the spaces from between longer words in order to cram more in.

Of course, we'll still be including ten minutes of non-interactive paragraphs when you first open the magazine, accompanied by a one-hit-wonder from four pig-ugly guitarists in drainpipe trousers pretending they're from another decade.

We want fans of Byronic Man to enjoy a complete freedom of how they interpret the words. If they want a 'quick read', they can opt for the 'quick read' mode, where they get a couple of minutes to digest what they can before being kicked back to the beginning. If you want to read with your friends, you can enjoy the co-operative mode, where readers take turn calling out alternate words, though in order to maximise our revenues, you will require two copies of the magazine for this. And two people.

We've spent a fortune on focus testing. It seems readers have had a couple of gripes with the last few December columns: they'd like all columns to be like that one they read in *Edge* once but with more realism.

The odd person mentioned they wanted more graphics. We're taking all of this into account. We're also actively looking at features found in other opinion pieces, and will be finding ways in which to incorporate them just as soon as we've come up with a clever trademarkable name for them.

But we're in crunch time now. This year's December column needs to be submitted in an hour, so unfortunately we're stripping out most of our intended new literary devices. But in an interview with Computer And Video Games dot com before this is published, I'll seek to reassure Byronic Man fans that next year's iteration really will be the best yet. And you can all be disappointed when the final version is published. Don't worry, it really will be properly good next time, promise, promise, promise.

Happy new year, games industry!

simon@thetriforce.com

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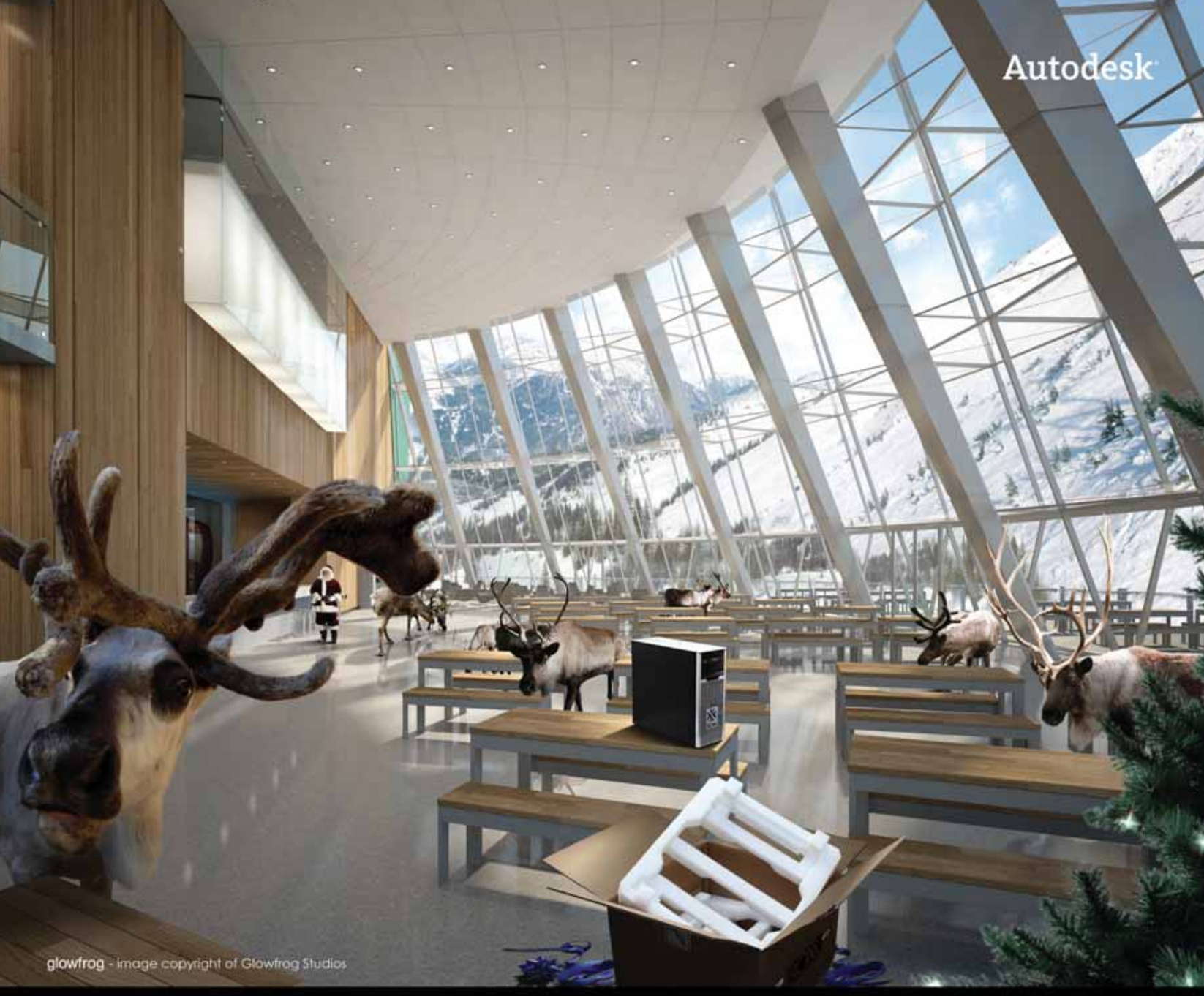

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